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WIZARD contents

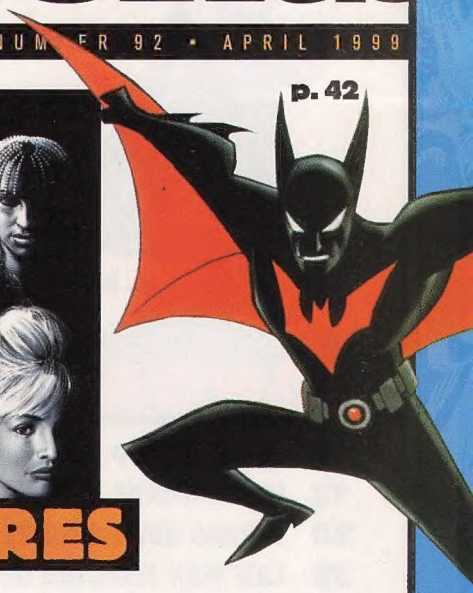
THE COMICS MAGAZINE • NUMBER 92 • APRIL 1999

HEY, OVER HERE!

Tying into our celebratory, year-long countdown to the new millennium, *Wizard* looks toward the future in each 1999 issue. On **page 34**, take a look at how the end of the universe is coming next millennium, at least according to Grant Morrison's Vertigo title ***The Invisibles***. Then see the Batman of the next millennium as we go behind the scenes of the new animated series "**Batman Beyond**" on **page 42**. After that, jump to **page 54** to see which company, **DC or Marvel**, will be THE comics publisher of the new millennium.

COUNTDOWN TO WIZARD 2000

ISSUES TO GO



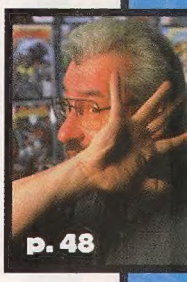
34 INVISIBLE MAN
Writer Grant Morrison counts down to the end of the world in the conspiracy-riddled universe of *The Invisibles*. **By Mike Searle**

38 RED DAWN
The 10 things you've always wanted to know about Dawn but were afraid to ask. **By Jim McLauchlin**

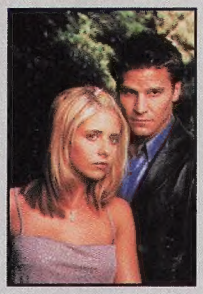
42 TOMORROW KNIGHT
The Dark Knight leaps to the future in the hit animated series "Batman Beyond." **By D.B. Nicholls and Patrick Sauriol**

48 THE WIZARD Q&A: TOM DEFALCO
He changed Spider-Man's costume. He killed off Mr. Fantastic. Now self-proclaimed "bozo-in-chief" Tom DeFalco takes on the future world of Marvel with its MC2 line. **By Greg Orlando**

54 TUG OF WAR
Wizard answers the age-old question: who's better, Marvel or DC? **By the *Wizard* Staff**



ON THE COVERS



Dawn (left) was illustrated by Joseph Michael Linsner. To prepare yourself for the redhead's new mini-series, rise to **page 38**. **Superman/Spider-Man** was illustrated by Kevin Maguire and Al Gordon, and colored by Liquid Graphics. To see who wins our contest between DC and Marvel, race to **page 54**! And to get in on the vampire slayin' action, check out our **Buffy** the Vampire Slayer Contest on **page 70** and order our *Buffy* #1/2 offer on **page 80**.

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70 BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER
One lucky winner will take home a bufferific prize package, including an autographed photo of Buffy herself, original comic art, T-shirts and more!

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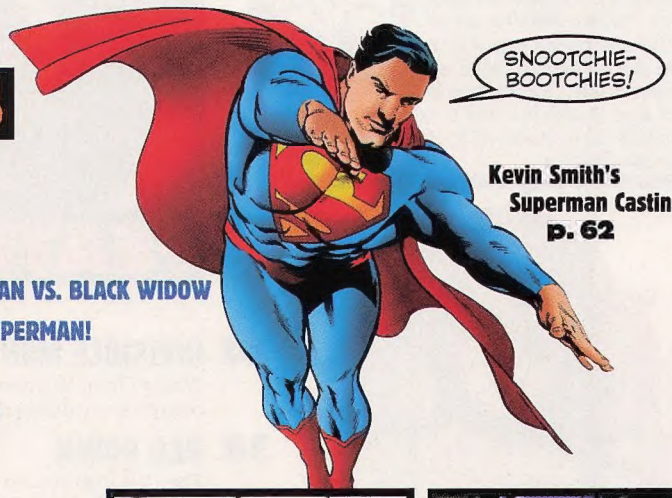

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COOL STUFF THROUGH THE MAIL

EXCLUSIVE OFFER

BUFFY #1/2

In the buff! Here's your *only* chance to get the exclusive *Buffy* #1/2 comic featuring Willow, Xander, Giles and Buffy as they come face to face with the all-new monster Stinger, in a story by Christopher Golden and Hector Gomez! Stalk your way to **page 80**.

BUFFY PHOTOS COURTESY OF DARK HORSE COMICS AND THE WB. ALL OTHER PHOTOS: PAUL SCHIRALDI

The World Will Kneel Before Him

UNCANNY X-MEN #368
The Aftermath Of "The Magneto War"!

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MARVEL COMICS

In March, The Master Of Magnetism Rules

PUBLISHER'S LETTER

"DANGER! DANGER! THIS GOOFBALL'S NOT IN MY CONTRACT!"

CAUGHT IN THE WEB

It seems like everywhere you turn, everyone is talking about the Internet. How it's going to do this. How it's going to do that....Well, it's true and it will do even more. So we ask the question again, how will this affect comic books? It won't affect the physical comic book—just like Coca-Cola won't change—but it will change everything from how you buy it, to how you find what you're looking for, and how you find others who are interested in it as much as you.

Www.wizardworld.com is *Wizard*'s Internet address. If you haven't visited us recently, I recommend you do. We have just redesigned our site to bring you the most current news and market information possible. We can use the Web to provide daily information to you on all the interests you have from comics to Star Wars to wrestling. We also scan the Web for comic book and action figure transactions, and provide a daily listing of the interesting deals that went down, from rare variants to #1 issues.

We have reader polls going on all the time, so if you want to get your message heard, come and vote. We'll soon be adding lots more areas to cast your opinions, you can even send "The Bunny" or Jim McLauchlin letters in a quicker and easier way. Also sign up for our weekly newsletter while you're at it for a special *Wizard* top 10 created by *you*, the readers, every week.

This month we have a very cool *Buffy, The Vampire Slayer* #1/2 offer so make sure you send away for it.

Inside, we have a look at *JLA* writer Grant Morrison's bizarre cult book *The Invisibles*, step behind the scenes of the new "Batman Beyond" animated series, and find out everything we ever wanted to know about Dawn. There's also a great interview with MC2 writer and creator Tom DeFalco. And we finally pit the two biggest comic book companies—Marvel and DC—against each other to see which company is the best right now. It's going to be a great battle, so make sure you check it out.

See ya,

Gareb S. Shamus

MASTHEAD

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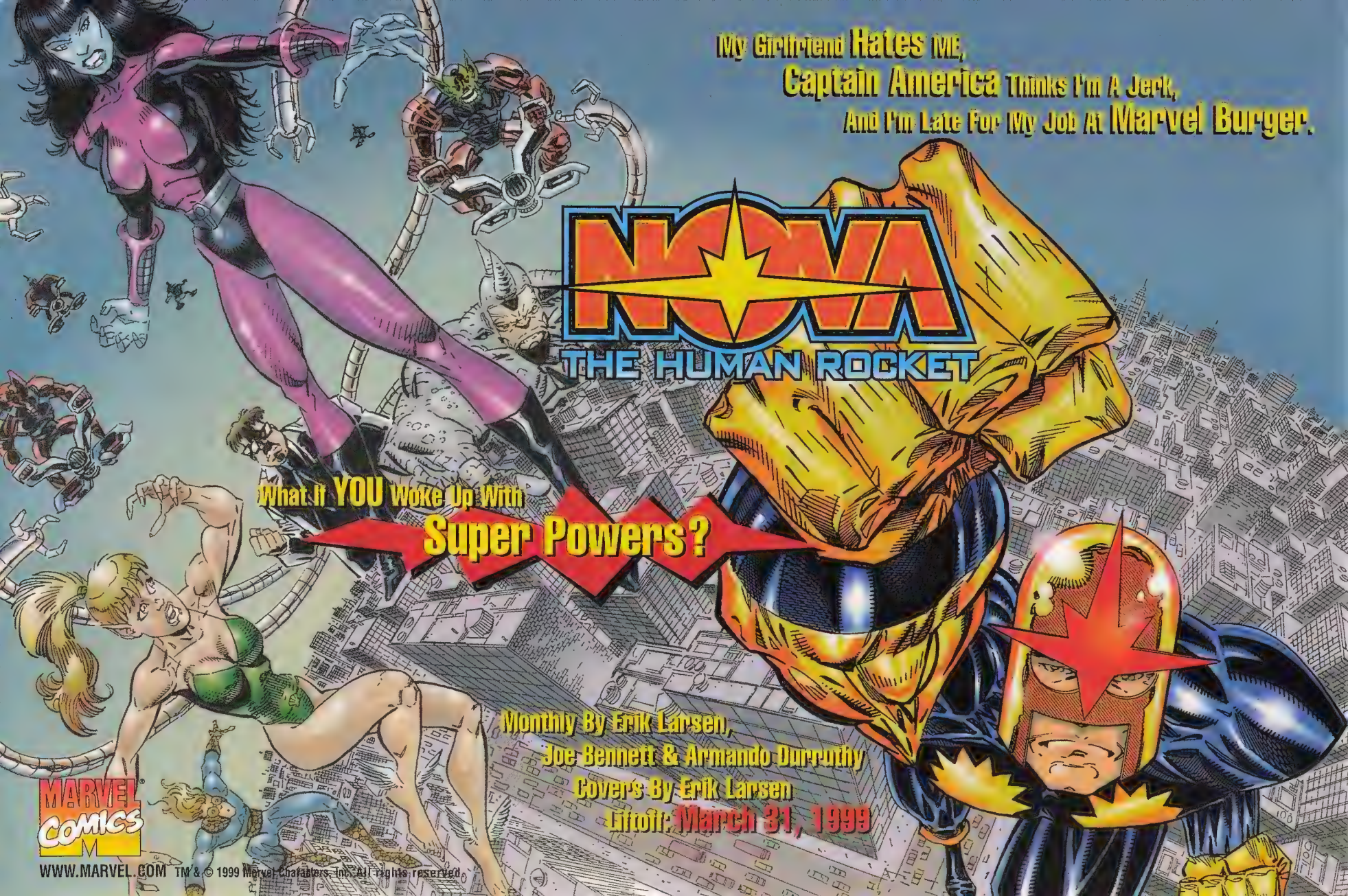
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MAGIC WORDS

THESE LETTERS ARE NOT TO BE USED AS A LIFE-SAVING DEVICE

SUPERMAN GETS DRUNK... GRANT MORRISON'S PRICE... ...AND WHITE CASTLES REVEALED!

It's kinda appropriate—seeing as how we're early in the new year—that many letters we're getting deal with new titles. Marvel's *Slingers*, *Inhumans* and *Black Panther* seem to have caught on, as has Dark Horse's *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*.

And it's kinda heart-warming—seeing as how I've always got an agenda to push—that many other letters we're getting deal with monkeys, pie and the ever-present *Wizard* Bunny. It's nice to know that our ongoing efforts to brainwash the comic-reading public with well-placed images and catch-phrases is taking root.

We now begin this month's regularly scheduled forcible indoctrination, and lead off this month with one of comics' eternal questions:

'Sup, Jim!

Why is comic book blood sometimes colored black instead of red?

Daniel Katzen
herper1@cavemen.net

Hue-master Tom Smith, who colors the nooks and crannies of George Pérez's art on *Avengers* every month, says it's an editorial decision. Many publishers are scared off by too much blood. "Whenever I've done blood, I've done it in red," Smith says. "But sometimes they'll change it to brown, blue, purple, whatever."

Smith says typically Marvel and DC lean toward cleaning up the gore. "That's just the way things have been at those companies for years," according to Smith. But it's not that way everywhere.

Smith also colored *Crimson Plague*, a Pérez-owned series for Event Comics. "George always wanted more blood!" Smith says. "It's called *'Crimson' Plague* for a reason, you know." Smith has also worked for horror-meister Chaos! Comics, where the veiny goodness flows like water. Its motto, according to Smith? "The redder, the better."

Dear Jimmy-Poo,

I was wondering: Who inked *Fantastic Four* #1, the first Marvel Comic of the modern era?

Kyle Saubert
Lake Zurich, IL

We all know that Jolly Jack Kirby penciled *FF #1*. But Kirby's cover was inked by Dazzlin' Dick Ayers, and his interiors by Adorable Artie Simek (who also one of Marvel's key letterers during the '60s and '70s).

And don't call me "Jimmy-Poo."

Dear Jim,

I have some questions about John Romita Jr., the artist of *Thor* and *Peter Parker: Spider-Man*.

1) What's his favorite comic character to draw?
2) What's his favorite comic that he's worked on?
3) What book contained his first artwork?

Michal Szyksznian
banknot@friko6.onet.pl

I have some answers about John Romita Jr.

1) John Jr. says it's Daredevil, a character he shares a lot of

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7 minutes

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BUNNY AWARD

LETTER OF THE MONTH

BUNNY PHOTO: PAUL SCHRADER

Jim takes his favorite letter and spotlights it here. There's no logic attached to this, nor is there a prize.

Dear All-Mighty Jim,

I have a few questions regarding the Bunny:

1) Who would win in a fight, *Wizard* Publisher Gareb Shamus or the Bunny?

2) Has the Bunny ever considered a career in pro wrestling?

3) What flavor of pie does he prefer, apple or pumpkin?

4) How does the Bunny manage to keep his fur so shiny?

Steven Q. Sterne
vic6_98@yahoo.com

I have a few answers regarding the Bunny:

1) The Bunny. Gareb is a little sissy-Mary who cries every time he gets a paper cut. The Bunny is 6 feet of furry fury unbound by the rules of man, packin' a big hammer. That's hardly a contest.

2) He's considering it right now. He has ring experience. He used to be a boxer, but had to quit the sport when they outlawed the rabbit punch.

3) Pumpkin all the way.

4) A healthy diet consisting largely of carrots, bean dip, Cheez-Its, hard-boiled eggs and rum; Prell shampoo bought by the 55-gallon drum; and an exercise regimen including regular beatings of whoever the hell he pleases. Including Gareb.

Hey, it's a tough job, but the Bunny loves his work.

Dear Jim,

Has Superman ever won the Nobel Peace Prize?

Travis Worttrey
Machesuey Park, IL

Nope. Within the friendly confines of the DC Universe, Big Blue has done more than his share for peace on our planet. But that damn Nobel Committee keeps giving the award to guys with funny names like Henry Kissinger and Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

Which is not say that Supes doesn't have an impressive list of *other* accomplishments. He came in second in the limbo contest on his 1997 "Jamaican Sensation" cruise vacation, he was voted "Most Likely to Kick the Snot out of Brainiac on a Regular Basis" by his high-school graduating class, and he and Lois Lane once scored a 95 on "Dance Fever."

Hey Jimmers:

Okay, I know all about Superman's near-invulnerability to dangerous and harmful materials, but I've been wondering, just how many beers would it take to get Superman drunk? And I mean *staggering* drunk, baby!

Bryan Crouch
BRYGL2814@aol.com

How many beers? Try an infinite number. Plus one. And then some. "There is nothing of this Earth that can get Superman drunk," Superman Assistant Editor Maureen McTigue says. "But there might be stuff *not* of this Earth that could do the job."

Hmmm. Looks like Supes should stay away from the "Kryptonite Cocktail" special at Chuty's House of Beer.

And don't call me "Jimmers."

Dear Wizard,

I hear *JLA* writer Grant Morrison may be killing off a JLA member or two when he leaves the book. Will Morrison kill Steel? If this is not in his plans, will he accept bribes to do it?

Bench McFerrin
Benchmcfrn@aol.com

Morrison confirms that one or more JLAers will indeed Sleep the Great Sleep From Which None (Except, Of Course, Comic Characters) Return by the time he bids *JLA* a fond farewell in late 1999. "But I'm not going to tell anyone who's going to be killed yet," Morrison says.

On the happy side, Grant is willing to wax your least-fave...for a price. "It would take some combination of money, Stolichnaya vodka and women," Morrison said.

history with. "Daredevil's a challenge," Romita says. "His costume is so simple, but because of that, there's so much you have to do with light and shadow to give him different looks. I used to watch my father when he drew *Daredevil* back in the '60s and seeing what he was doing with blacks and contrasts got me interested in drawing."

2) Romita chooses the *Daredevil: Man Without Fear* mini-series written by Frank Miller as his personal favorite. "From start to finish, it was a labor of love. I had called Frank about working on something else, and he came back with this Daredevil project. It took me four years to finish, working on and off. It took so long, it kind of turned into my *War and Peace*. But I loved every page. And it was different, because there were no costumes until the very last page."

3) Marvel's *Amazing Spider-Man Annual* #11, from 1977. But Romita's not too proud of it. "Oh, it was a mess!" he says. "It was a six-page backup titled 'Chaos at the Coffee Bean.' I'm lucky that Al Milgrom, the inker, was able to save it. But I learned from the experience. I think I got better. I mean, didn't I?"

Yep. He certainly did.

HEY! IT'S PEN PALS...

Send your name, address, age, sex and three favorite titles to Pen Pals, c/o the "Magic Words" address at the end of this column (put your age on the envelope). The only way to get your Internet address listed instead is to post your info in the Pen Pals board on America Online's "Wizard World" forum (keyword: Wizard; look in the Wizard Bulletin Board, under Message Boards). **Pre-'98 entrants:** Please resend your entries.

"After all, I may be taking out some major players in the DC Universe. If you want to hire a hitman, I'm in the right place to do it. But it will require a large payment."

Okay. I'll pony up $100 just to see that pain-in-the-ass Orion get blown up real good.

Dear Silly Monkey,

I got me a few questions and I'd like a few answers!

1) Will Marvel be offering subscriptions to the *Slingers* comic?

2) Why did artist Adam Pollina go and get all good after he left *X-Force*?

Lauren Elias
ec_onehitwonder@hotmail.com

Okey-dokey!

1) Maybe. According to Marvel Editor Bill Rosemann, *Slingers* is currently under consideration for subscriptions. Marvel typically waits about six months to track a book's sales before offering it as a subscription title. The reason? Should a book get canceled early, it doesn't want to disappoint readers. Keep checking Marvel's subscription ads to keep up on the *Slingers* status.

2) Personally, I think Adam was doin' a pretty kick-ass job on *X-Force*. But I will agree that he got even better with the *Slingers* #0 book that came bagged with *Wizard* #88. We'll see how Adam does on his next project—March's *Witchblade Infinity* from Top Cow. And after that, Adam just might be doing even more stuff for the Cow. Stay tuned.

Y'know, I kinda like "Silly Monkey."

Dear All-Knowing Jim,

I have some pretty spankin' questions that I'd like to ask:

1) Why was there no "Bunny Award" in *Wizard* #89's "Magic Words"?

2) Will Michael Turner ever combine Fathom and Witchblade in one comic? That would kick major ass if he did!

3) Do you like your coffee with sugar and cream?

Sam Spires
Weaverville, NC

"Spankin' questions?" Okayyyy...

1) Because that was the issue that I asked comic writers, artists, and assorted hangers-on to send in letters for. I didn't think it was appropriate to show favoritism by singling one letter writer out above the others. But now that all is said and done, I feel secure in saying that I love *Cable* writer Joe Casey just a little bit more than all those other goofs.

2) Patience, my son, patience. Turner says, "I've had a Fathom-meets-Witchblade story in my head for a while now. I do intend to write it sometime in the future, but the where and when remains unknown."

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Likes: Spider-titles, *Superman*, Image titles

3) What the Hell kind of stupid question is that? I'm a man, therefore I drink my coffee like a man does—black. You want sugar? Drink Coca-Cola. You want cream? Go squeeze a cow.

Jim-San,

1) What exactly are White Castles? They seem to be a big thing at *Wizard*. But what are they?

2) Do you have 50 cents I can borrow?

3) Who would win in a fight—the Hulk or Superman?

4) How come Batman never, ever uses a Bat-rope more than once?

Brent Griffis
magicalmonkey0@Juno.com

1) White Castles are scrumptious little square hamburger treats that get their unique flavor from the way they're prepared—they're steamed instead of fried or grilled. They taste great, but they're equally famous for...uh...let's just say "the quick fashion in which they achieve egress from your system." Still, it is an amazing culinary concoction which must be sampled at least once in life.

But White Castle restaurants are regional. They can only be found east of the Mississippi River or in Kansas City, Mo. So if you're not near one, hop in the car and ride. It's worth it.

And bring *Uncanny X-Men* artist Adam Kubert along with ya. He's a huge fan who's actually tried to open a Castle several times. But the company doesn't franchise.

2) No. But if I did, you could buy a White Castle hamburger! The burgers are a mere 49 cents each. What a bargain! Ask Adam. Maybe he'll front you the dough.

3) Hulk vs. Supes? Find out in *Hulk/Superman*, a 48-page one-shot published by Marvel Comics in May. Big Green and Big Blue have at it in a slobberknocker that oughtta loosen a few fillings.

4) Wow. Is it just me, or does this sound like a dirty joke just waiting to happen?

And I *definitely* like "Jim-San." This is getting better.

Dear Jim,

Prices on the hardcover "Marvel Masterworks" reprint series have gone through the roof due to its low print runs and high demand. But I just saw a new solicitation for *Marvel Masterworks Volume I* (*Amazing Spider-Man* #1-#10). My question: Is Marvel planning on re-releasing the whole set of 27 "Masterworks" volumes?

Shawn C. Goldfarb
Fort Lauderdale, FL

Marvel will be re-releasing *Masterworks* on a case-by-case basis, largely tying into reader demand and current product pushes. Next on the slate? A *Daredevil* "Masterworks" in March, reprinting #1-#11 (yes, #11) of the original series. Keep screaming and maybe Marvel will pony up some more.

Dear Jim,

Will there be a trade paperback collecting the entire *300* mini-series by Frank Miller anytime soon?

Chris Lay
Charlotte, NC

Paperback? Nay! Mere paper cannot contain *300*, the tale of 300 brave Spartan soldiers who held off the Persian army at the battle of Thermopylae! Thus, Dark Horse Comics is planning to collect all five issues in a huge honkin' double-size hardcover in July. No paperback is planned. So there.

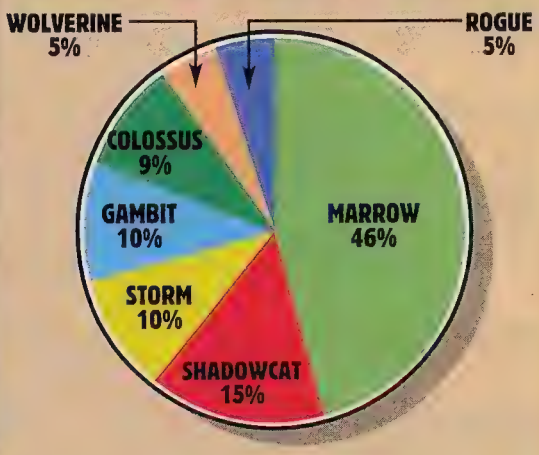
Jim:

Daredevil is back! Kevin Smith, the salvager! From an ugly larva to

SURVEY SAYS

ONLINE QUESTION OF THE MONTH

WHICH X-MEN MEMBER DO YOU WANT DEAD IN 1999?



The message came in loud and clear: "Kill Marrow!"

In a landslide decision, fans voting in an online poll (through www.wizardworld.com) placed Marrow in their crosshairs as the X-Man they most wanted to die in 1999. "She's just a lame version of Wolverine, and one Wolverine's more than enough on the X-Men," said one voter.

Shadowcat was marked for death by many fans as well, most claiming that she has become an empty character with lame powers. The only mutants to draw write-ins were Joseph and Professor X. "Killing the Professor could make the book interesting again," one respondent commented.

The X-Man most protected by the fans? Nightcrawler. He only drew *one* vote, and many added in their responses that he was the best character around for the team. ■ **NACHIE CASTRO**

BEN VIS
Age: 16 Sex: M
W247 S 10395 Center Drive
Mukwonago, WI 53149
Likes: vampires, X-Men

TUXEDO KID
Age: 14 Sex: M
111 S. 13Th Ave. Lot B14
Mendota, IL 61342
Likes: "Sailor Moon," Spider-Man, *Deadpool*

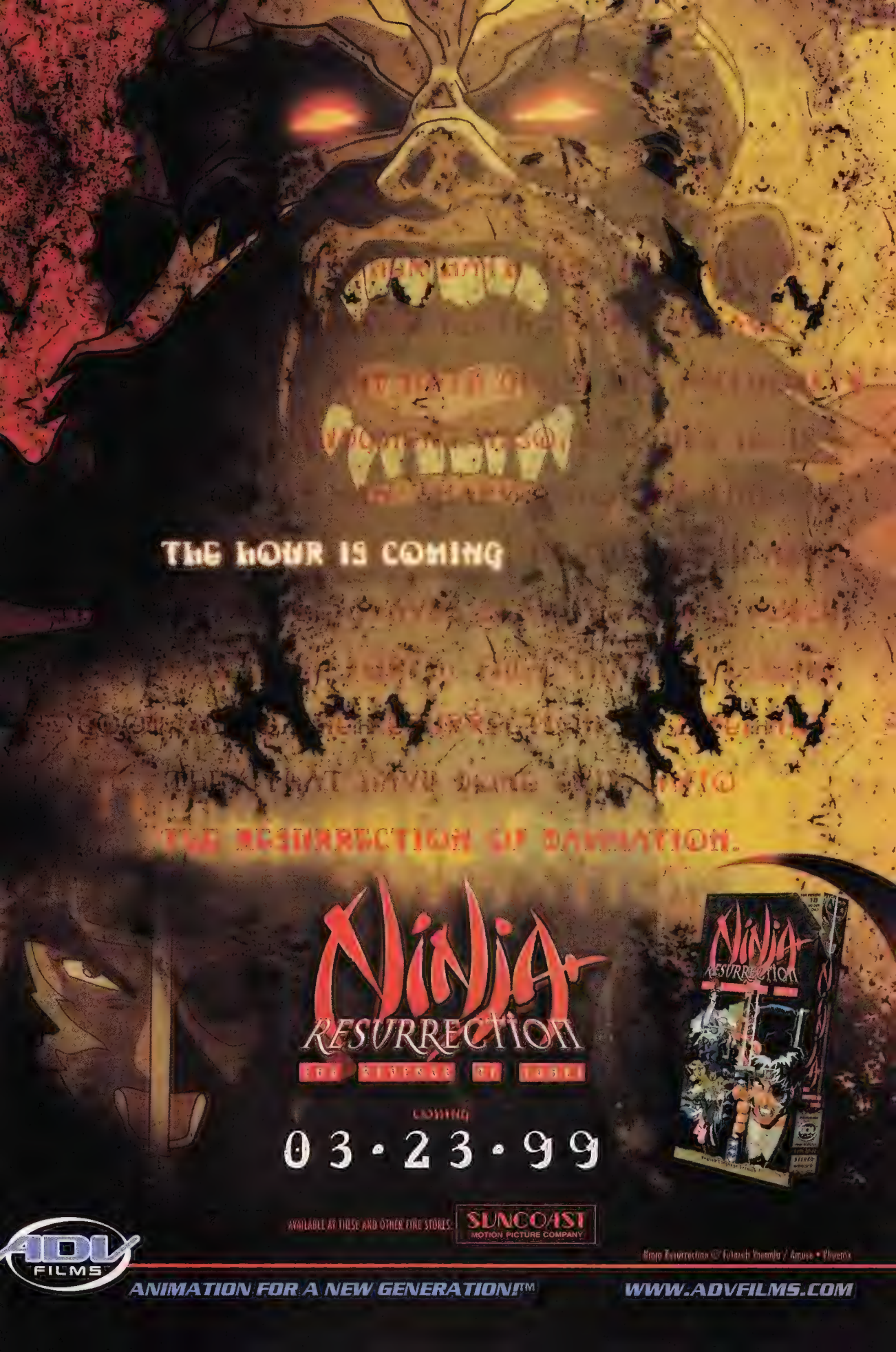
DEAN J. PARKER
Age: 21 Sex: M
959 Dahlgren Road
P.O. Box 3038
Dahlgren, VA 22448
Likes: Dawn, X-titles, *KISS: Psycho Circus*

EARL TANNER, JR.
Age: 48 Sex: M
105 Fraternity Dr.
Lafayette, LA 70506
Likes: *Legion of Super Heroes*, *Legionnaires*, All Superman titles

HEATH EDWARDS
Age: 18 Sex: M
P.O. Box 155
252 Clarksville Street
Trenton, KY 42286
Likes: X-titles, *Wolverine*, *What if...?*

JOSEPH GEE
Age: 17 Sex: M
17 Howland Ave.
Stafford Springs, CT 06076
Likes: Too much to list here

TIM SLITOR
Age: 32 Sex: M
8195 Wea St. #A
De Soto, KS 66018-8373
Likes: 70s *Incredible Hulk*, *Kiss: Psycho Circus*, *Captain America*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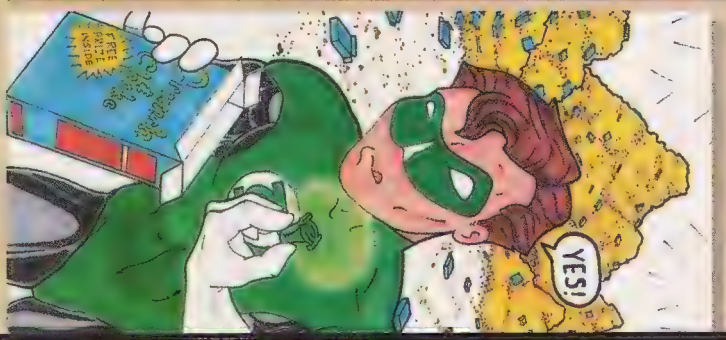
LETTER ART

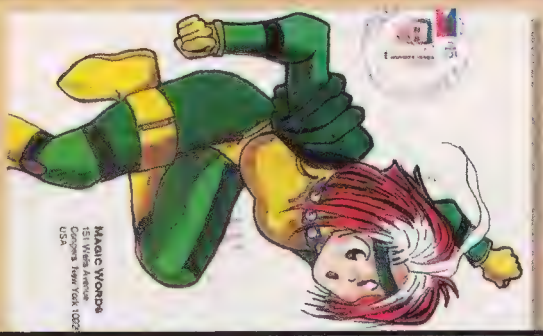
Each fan who has letter art printed this month will receive a *Black Panther* comic signed by artist Joe Jusko, plus a copy of this issue of *Wizard* signed by the entire *Wizard* creative staff! The talented creator of this month's best envelope also scores an original page of Jusko's *Black Panther* art. (Thanks to Joe for donating the goodies!) Artists: Please include a clearly printed return address and a list of the characters depicted on the back of your envelope. Good luck!

ENVELOPE OF THE MONTH.....THE PRIZE

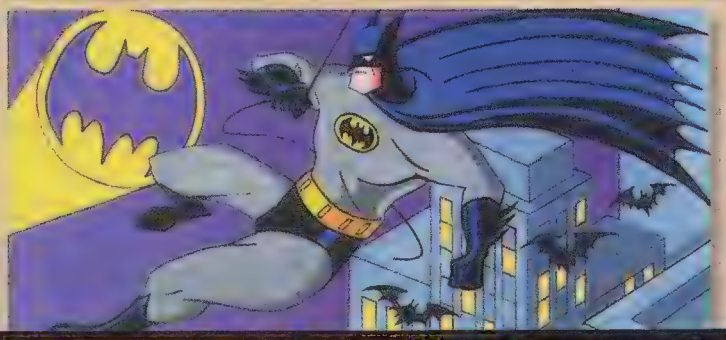
THE ALIEN Kevin Olson Dallas, TX



GREEN LANTERN'S ORIGIN Nick Gutierrez Bakersfield, CA



MANGA ROGUE April Lalmbio Masaya, Bay, Phillipines



GREETINGS FROM GOTHAM Ryan Chovan Sharon, PA

a beautiful butterfly! Smith and Palmiotti are bowdy bowdy and rowdy rowdy!

Tim Garrison
DrrEvazan@aol.com

Ladies and gentlemen, 1970s game-show poet Nipsy Russell is not dead. He just changed his name to "Tim Garrison."

Hey Jim,
If you should ever become incapacitated, who would take over the role of Designated Smart-Ass for *Wizard*?

Aaron Cecil
Marengo, IN

That would be our art department tag-team of André D. Shell and James Walker, the Runners-Up in the *Wizard* Miss Smart-Ass Pageant. Should I die, lose my sense of sarcasm or have nude photos of myself appear in a magazine (other than *Wizard*, of course), André and James stand ready, willing and able to step in.

Damn. I'd better give *Penthouse* a call and tell them to kill that photo spread.

Y'know, the clock on the wall says...I've been here for 36 consecutive months?! Yowch! I *thought* my ass was starting to take on the same contours of this chair. I feel a wave of incapacitation coming on, so in an effort to rest up (and maintain my white-knuckle, by-the-fingernails grip on what passes for sanity), I think I'll take next month off from "Magic Words" and leave you to the tender mercies of André and James. Don't bother treating them gently. 'Cause they won't do the same for you.

So until *two* months from now, I remain...

—Jim McLauchlin

Mix two parts gumption with three parts cantankerous; stir until it gels. Let it sit in the refrigerator overnight, and in the morning, you'll have Jim McLauchlin.

Send letters to:
Magic Words
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920
or e-mail us at WizWords@aol.com

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www.foxhome.com/marvel

INCOMING!!! Get outta the X-Men's way. They got a new writer to break in (Alan Davis), a new adventure to have (a space odyssey) and a new line to launch (Marvel Tech).

DAVIS TO STEER 'X-MEN' INTO NEW MILLENNIUM

X-Men's 'Tech Saga' in June leads to new line of books

Traveling through space. Lost in time. Launching a new branch of the Marvel Universe.

Does it sound as if it'll be a busy summer for the X-Men? It does. And now there's one man steering the ship who will drive Marvel's mutant team into the new millennium: Alan Davis.

Remove the "interim" from Davis' title of "interim writer" on *Uncanny X-Men* and *X-Men*. For the foreseeable future, comics' two top-selling titles are plotted by Davis. "I'm in it for the fun," Davis said of his step up. "I still consider myself a penciler first and foremost. It's a different situation to be a writer, especially on books like X-Men that can tie into other things. It becomes a big job."

Marvel Editor-in-Chief Bob Harras is sure Davis, who continues as the regular *X-Men* penciler in addition to his writing chores, is up to the job. "We feel our most important element is Alan Davis. He comes before everything else on these books. We're working with Alan to keep him comfortable with the X-Men scheduling. Providing we continue to be successful with that, we've got our guy."

And Davis plans...a well-structured plan. "Quite a lot of different things are going on," he said, "but now we'll have stories that come together, rather than act merely as monthly action episodes."

Here's how Davis' plan shakes down:

X-Men in Space

May's books see the X-Men lost in space following a search for the villain Juggernaut, who's been trapped in another dimension. An attempt to get the X-Men back to their home dimension misfires, and lands the team in deep space. And before the X-Men can get out of that mess, a bit of time travel is required. "It's one of the jaunts like the X-Men always used to do," Davis said. "I think that's always been the best of the X-Men—a story that's a bit of an odyssey, where they've lost control of their environment." And while the focus is on the quest to get home, Davis also promises an established

cosmic Marvel menace with designs on the Earth for the mutants to face off against.

X-Men 'Tech'

The pace picks up in June, as the mutant X-Men are scheduled for a three-part story running through *Uncanny X-Men* #371, *X-Men* #91 and the *X-Men 1999* annual. A major and well-established Marvel villain who the X-Men have never faced attempts a takeover of the massive S.H.I.E.L.D. Helicarrier and the X-Men rush in to save the day. "It's a way to throw them into unfamiliar terrain," X-Men Assistant Editor Jason Liebig said. "The X-Men aren't exactly welcome on the Helicarrier, and the pairing with a different nemesis is something you wouldn't expect."

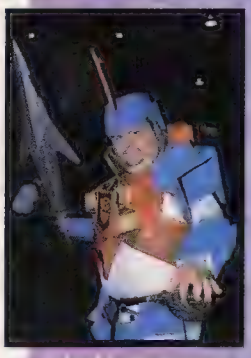
Perhaps more importantly, events on the Helicarrier lead to the introduction of three technological-based characters who will be getting their own titles later in the summer under the working heading of "Marvel Tech" (see sidebar). Liebig admits it's a bit of a switch using Marvel's mutants to introduce a non-mutant line, but points again to Davis' pull. "We've got good people presenting things in the X-Men books," Liebig said. "Hopefully, this can be a good showcase and a way to get people excited."

The Future?

As the year marches on, the X-Men march on to finally wrap up several dangling plot threads. Before the millennium rolls in, a resolution will be given to the ongoing problem of the mutant-killing Legacy Virus. The missing third Summers brother, kin to former X-Men Cyclops and Havok, will finally be revealed. All the while, new mysteries will be started. But to do all this, Davis will pull in a bit of help from time to time. Former *X-Men* writer Fabian Nicieza already pitched in by scripting five issues over Davis' plots when the *Magneto War* one-shot was added to the schedule. And *Cable* writer Joe Casey is set to script an issue or three when things get thick again with a proposed July-launch mini-series. "It's been a lot of work," Davis said. "But everything will head in one general direction by the time we're done here." ■ JIM McLAUCHLIN

Midget sensation Kenny Baker kicks off world tour at local comic con. "Tall urinals suck," proclaimed bite-sized star before being dipped in batter and fried golden brown.

Pantsless Man of Steel shakes jimmy at local park; "My joint is jumpin'!" boasted Last Son of Krypton before battling Captain Cold and falling prey to shrinkage.



Autobot leader succumbs to Hostess baked goods: "I haven't seen lil' Optimus in four months," gurgled once-proud warrior moments before bursting like an overripe fruit.

HEAVY METAL HEROES

Marvel cranks up the heavy metal this summer with "Marvel Tech," a launch of three new, ongoing series growing out of June's X-Men event. "We're looking to add things that are new, but hopefully have some name recognition," Marvel Editor-in-Chief Bob Harras said. As such, all the "Tech" books feature established Marvel names, but with new twists. Here's a look at the books:

DEATHLOK Written by Joe Casey (*Cable*), penciled by either Leonardo Manco (*Werewolf by Night*) or Ashley Wood (*Ghost Rider 2099*), July release. It's a brand-new Deathlok, with no connection to past cyborgs who have taken the name. But this Deathlok is still part-man, part-machine, and 100 percent soldier. "I'm actually looking to do something more psychological than technological," Casey said. "It should be decidedly different than Marvel's current crop of books. In this era of very conservative comics, I'm interested in pushing the envelope a bit."

MAGUS Writer to be determined, penciled by Pascual Ferry (*Heroes For Hire*), July release. He's back! The sadistic alien living machine from the pages of Marvel's previous *New Mutants* has returned. But this time, he's bonded to a human host that Editor Matt Idelson described as "a very well-established X-Men supporting character." The book's feel, according to Idelson, will be "Dawson's Creek" meets science fiction. "The character is a nice, sweet kid, but the Magus is a dangerous, explosive element. There's quite a struggle going on."

X-51, THE MACHINE MAN Written by Mike Higgins and Karl Bollers, penciled by German Garcia (*X-Men*), August release. The writers who explored the character in two 1998 Marvel annuals venture in a new direction. "It's the same Machine Man unit you've seen before," Idelson said. "But he's not the happy-go-lucky, stretchy-armed robot you may remember. This is the robot that's always tried to be human, but he gets driven 10 steps back from where he really wants to be." ■ JM

ROBOTS ATE ALL OF MY TV DINNERS

KENNY BAKER PHOTO BY PAUL SCHIRALDI; OTHER PHOTOS BY HOLLY STEIN.

BYRNE WRITES 'SPIDER-WOMAN'

Her identity remains secret, will tie directly into Spider-Man

After scaling back the Spider-Man line in 1998, Marvel Comics is expanding it in '99, and building with someone close at hand: John Byrne.

Byrne, the penciler of *Amazing Spider-Man* and writer/penciler for the *Spider-Man: Chapter One* mini-series, will expand his Spider-schedule by writing a new *Spider-Woman* ongoing series beginning in May. Penciler Bart Sears (*X-O Manowar*) will join Byrne for what will hopefully be a bit of fun.

"The intent is to make this book fairly lighthearted," Byrne said, "though not in a wacky way. It's going to be a good, old-fashioned Marvel soap-opera book."

And Byrne is keeping the secret identity of Spider-Woman just that—a secret, at least for a while. He said the first chunk of issues will feature a character claiming the title of Spider-Woman, but focus more on the costumed identity than on the woman behind the mask. Byrne also said readers have seen this mysterious Spider-Woman before, and that several other familiar Spider-Man cast members will pop into this title.

"There will be considerable bouncing back and forth with the existing books," Byrne said. "We want *Spider-Woman* to feel like a 'Spider-Man' title. It's legitimately part of the ongoing 'Spider Saga,' for lack of a better term."

But why add to an already busy schedule? Byrne just wanted to offer all Spidey fans a fun comic. "And hopefully, create a character that male and female readers can enjoy equally," he said. "You know, those elusive female readers. Both of them." ■ TRENT D. McNEELEY

MADAME WEB The new Spider-Woman as she debuted (inset) and a possible costume revision for her new book.

THE BUZZBIN

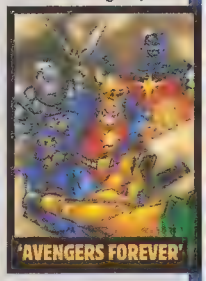
THE INSIDE SCOOP ON THE COMIC INDUSTRY

SPAWNING GROUND! *Spawn: The Dark Ages* is new. So is *Cy-Gor*. And *Sam & Twitch*. Todd McFarlane Productions is cranking out more titles than ever and word is a second current-day, in-continuity core *Spawn* book is next.

ANIMATED AVENGERS! Amid rustling rumors that an "Avengers" cartoon will happen this fall (!) come rumors that "Batman Adventures" Producer Bruce Timm is hard at work on *Avengers* #1 1/2, a one-shot that takes place between 1963's *Avengers* #1 and #2.

'CAP' FLAP! Seen *Captain America* #14? Notice no writer listed? Buzz says *Cap* scribe Mark Waid got miffed when Marvel re-scripted the story after it was already approved, and demanded his name be removed from the credits. Waid remains on the book...for now.

SOARING 'SLINGERS'! Positive word-of-mouth on *Slingers*, the new Marvel Spider-Man spinoff series, is building. Fans are turning on to the book's quirky team interplay, and new writer Joseph C. Harris is gaining new admirers every day.



'AVENGERS FOREVER'

'AVENGERS' IS FOREVER! The current *Avengers Forever* mini-series is not to be missed. Word is that when the 12 issues are said and done, Marvel will roll something big out of the time-spanning tale, possibly as early as November.

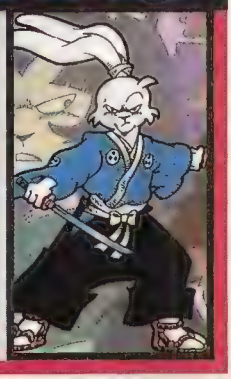
REAL WORLD COMICS? DC is gearing up a new line of comics called "Realworlds." While *nada* is known as yet about the "Realworlds" theme, indications are that sci-fi author Harlan Ellison and *Supergirl* scribe Peter David are revving up a Superman tale to launch the line.

X-MEN SOLO SERIES! Sneak peeks at Marvel's long-range plans show that a *Bishop* series (possibly a mini-series, possibly an ongoing) is in the works for late '99. Lee Weeks, recently of the *X-Men: Magneto War* one-shot, is attached as the artist.

we looked it up

WHO? WHERE? WHY?

U•SA•GI YO•JIM•BO *(ooh SO ge yo JIM bo)*, proper noun, 1984-present; 1 Literally translated from the Japanese, "rabbit bodyguard"; a hired soldier who...uh...happens to be a rabbit 2 Lighthearted, yet culturally accurate, character created by Stan Sakai that has been the subject of multiple Fantagraphics and Dark Horse Comics series 3 How a Spaniard with a lisp will tell you that you're all soggy, and his name is Jim



KEVIN SMITH GOES TO THE 'MALL'

The next installment of Kevin Smith film-based comics is finally available.

Filmmaker/comic writer Smith does *not* own all merchandise rights to "Mallrats," the middle child in his "Jersey Trilogy" of movies. So it took a bit of haggling with Universal Pictures for a *Mallrats* comic to happen. But now that the contract ink is dry, a four-issue Oni Press mini-series by Smith and an artist yet to be named is scheduled for July release. And fans can look forward to a new story, not just a movie adaptation.

"People have already seen the movie," Oni co-publisher Joe Nozemack said. "We think a new story right from the source—Kevin Smith—is better than presenting something again."

PHOTO COURTESY THE EVERETT COLLECTION

...AND THAT'S HOW BIG IT IS! Brodie and T.S. (left and right, respectively) might get to meet Stan Lee again in the *Mallrats* mini-series.

So Main characters from the movie—such as comic freak Brodie and his loyal sidekick T.S.—will be part of a new *Mallrats* tale. As will Jay and Silent Bob, recurring characters in Smith's films and the stars of their own self-titled smash-hit Oni mini-series. Someone else who might show up? Stan Lee, the longtime Marvel Comics publisher who appeared briefly in the "Mallrats" movie. Stan no longer has an exclusive contract with Marvel Comics, and Smith and Oni are currently trying to get Stan the Man into the *Mallrats* comic.

After *Mallrats*, will we see more of Smith's movie brainchildren in comics? That's the plan. "Next should be something spinning out of 'Dogma,'" Nozemack said, speaking of Smith's summer '99 movie release.

NACHIE CASTRO

BATMAN TAKES BROADWAY!

Dark Knight sings the blues?

A sure sign that Batman has been keeping some talents hidden from us: DC Comics parent company Warner Bros. is considering a "Batman" musical play, which could possibly open by 2000. The *New York Daily News* reported that Jim Steinman, a Grammy Award-winning composer, has been offered the writing chores.

Warner Bros. said only that the show was in the "exploratory stage" and that no casting or production has moved forward. It is not known if George Clooney has the pipes to pull off the title role.

DC's last foray into campy theatrics (besides the "Batman and Robin" movie, that is) was a musical based on Superman, which opened in March of 1966, and featured Superman and company singing, "It's Super-Nice."

DC had no comment when asked if Batman's utility belt contained a Bat-harmonica. **JAKE ROSSEN**

on the move

GOOD LUCK MOVING ON CAUSE I'M MOVIN' OUT

STRACZYNSKI

PHOTO BY BYRON J. COHEN

WHOA, NELLIE! THEM THAR COMIC BOOK WRITERS AND ARTISTS MOVE FASTER THAN SPIT ON A HOT GRIDDLE! SO HERE'S YOUR UPDATE AS TO WHERE EVERYONE IS. ENJOY.

"Babylon 5" creator J. Michael Straczynski, on bringing his new creator-owned *Rising Stars* to Top Cow: "I first sent word to them via their Web site. They didn't believe it was really me. They were sure it had to be a gag. The perception is that TV executive producers don't get involved in comics. But I was a comics fan long before I ever got into TV."

NAME	FORMER BOOK	NEW BOOK	WRITER/ARTIST	THE SCOOP
CHRIS BACHALO	*Uncanny X-Men*	*The Witching Hour*	Artist	*Owner of comics' best haircut, Bachalo tires of the ongoing X-struggle and heads back to his Vertigo roots for a new creator-owned series in late '99.*
TODD DEZAGO	*Sensational Spider-Man*	*Impulse*	Writer	Sensational *got the ax in the Spider-thinning, so Dezago moves to Impulse, a character he wrote in* JLA: World Without Grown-Ups.
BRIAN HOLGUIN	still co-writing *Spawn*	*Spawn: The Dark Ages*	Writer	*The man who would be Todd tightens his hold on the Spawnverse with a new medieval-era title.*
ADAM KUBERT	*X-Men*	*Uncanny X-Men*	Artist	*The X-Men pinch-hitter become permanent on* Uncanny. *Everyone loves Adam's powerful art. But can he meet deadlines?*
CLARENCE LANSANG	numerous Top Cow fill-ins	*The Darkness*	Artist	*Top Cow's "studio system" graduates Lansang to a high-profile ongoing all his own, replacing outgoing Joe Benitez.*
PAT LEE	*Darkminds*	*Punisher/Wolverine*	Artist	*Lee's been in the 'biz for years, but his ship finally came in with the manga-esque* Darkminds. *Now he's the newest "Marvel Knights" sensation.*
SCOTT LOBDELL	Still on *Wildcats*	*The Tenth, The Darkness, Divine Right*	Writer	*What the monkey? Lobdell's got Erik Larsen Syndrome–he's suddenly writing everything in sight.*
DAVID MACK	Still writing/ painting *Kabuki*	writing *Daredevil*	Writer/Artist	*Cult-favorite Mack has some big shoes to fill starting with* Daredevil *#9. He follows the acclaimed run by comics' newest golden child, screenwriter Kevin Smith.*
BRANDON PETERSON	*Arcanum*	X-Men family	Artist	*Brando's one-issue tryout on* X-Men *#80 pays big dividends. He's now the designated X-Men mini-series artist and fill-in guy.*
ETHAN VAN SCIVER	*Cyberfrog*	*Impulse*	Artist	*Van Sciver's a great artist, but we saw what? four issues of* Cyberfrog *in two years? Ethan must pick up the pace to keep up with* Impulse *when he starts with Dezago and #50.*
LIAM SHARP	*Man-Thing*	*Spawn: The Dark Ages*	Artist	*Horror and Goth are Sharp's two strong suits and he'll play to 'em both on this new launch.*
LOUISE SIMONSON	*Superman: The Man of Steel*	*Galactus: The Devourer* mini-series	Writer	*Weezie starts this 12-issue mini-series in April with her real-life son-in-law, artist Jon J Muth.*
J. MICHAEL STRACZYNSKI	"Babylon 5" TV series	*Rising Stars*	Writer	*The multiple Emmy award-winning TV producer should deliver top-notch writing to the already art-rich Top Cow.*
J.H. WILLIAMS III AND MICK GRAY	*Chase*	*Promethea*	Artists	*Chase got the DC ax, but the design-intensive art team of Williams and Gray will team up with Alan Moore on his "America's Best Comics" launch in June.*

McFARLANE GEARS UP WITH NEW TITLES

Todd McFarlane Productions is taking the contrary approach. Again. At a time when most publishers are cutting back on titles, McFarlane is expanding, as *Spawn* supporting characters Cy-Gor and Sam and Twitch are slated for their own Image titles.

THREE'S COMPANY Take a slob, a dweeb and a big friggin' ape and you get new Image titles.

Although originally conceived as two individual mini-series, current plans for these series call for an open-ended run. "We're not calling them mini-series, and we're not calling them ongoing series," Todd McFarlane Productions Publisher Beau Smith said. "Both tell a unique story, so they'll get whatever time they need to tell it."

July's *Cy-Gor*—still awaiting an artist—will be written by *Swamp Thing* horror veteran Rick Veitch. "Rick's done amazing things with Cy-Gor's thought processes," Smith said. "Cy-Gor's got a human and ape brain, with the ape part dominant, and there's this really strange intermixture of thought. Rick found a way to present this to readers. Basically, he's made this a modern-day Frankenstein story. I think [*Frankenstein* author] Mary Shelley would be very happy."

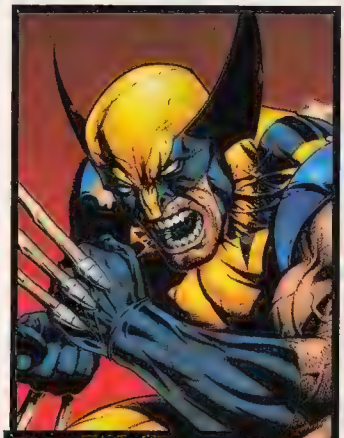
Sam & Twitch will be written by Brian Michael Bendis of *Jinx* fame, who claims his series will have a far different feel than the characters' comic appearances in *Spawn*. "This is pure, character-driven, crime fiction," Bendis said. "Sam and Twitch are going to be cops again. It's got a little 'Godfather,' a little 'Serpico,' and a lot of 'Homicide: Life on the Street' in it."

Angel Medina will take a brief break from his duties on *KISS: The Psycho Circus* to pencil the first issues of *Sam & Twitch*. "Angel keeps reinventing himself," Smith said. "He's got tons of styles in his repertoire. People are going to compare this book with *KISS* and think, 'This is the same guy?'" ■ **SCOTT BRICK**

LEINIL YU RECAPTURES 'WOLVERINE'

Call it the "Yu Switcheroo."

Seven issues after having moved popular and Marvel-exclusive penciler Leinil Francis Yu to X-Men fill-ins, Marvel is returning him to his old home at *Wolverine* with April's #139. Current *Wolverine* artist Jeff Matsuda, meanwhile, is in negotiations for his next series.



WHY YU...! Is Wolverine pumped that Leinil Yu is back drawing him, or did he just stub his toe?

Although Yu calls his X-perience a positive one, the swap doesn't have him complaining. "In terms of style, I work better with *Wolverine*," Yu said, explaining that the loner's series allows him more attention to detail than the team book did. "I was overwhelmed by the number of people you have to draw on each page. I now look at the other X-Men artists with more respect."

Matsuda is rumored to be moving to the *JLA/Witchblade* one-shot, or possibly other Top Cow projects. ■ **DEAN SIMAKIS**

NEWS&NOTES

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM
You know the sun will rise, and you know *Cerebus* will come out monthly. *Cerebus* #241 brings readers high adventure and highball glasses, all from the mind of Dave Sim, inevitably.

ACCLAIM COMICS
In April, *Shadowman: Deadside* #3 is all about having a laugh at the expense of dead people! With a story by Paul Jenkins (*Inhumans*) and painted artwork by Ashley Wood (*Ghost Rider 2099*), *Deadside* is a must-have for any fan of the macabre.

ADEPT BOOKS
Sweet #3 answers the age-old question: Can a young art student find true love with a sandwich shop owner on Mars right when the world is ending? The truth comes to light in April in this issue written and drawn by Leland Myrick.

ANTARCTIC PRESS
Antarctic teams up with Road Warrior wrestlers Hawk and Animal, along with the Children's Fitness Network, to introduce *Fit Force Five*. Written by Joe Dunn and drawn by Ben Dunn, this full-color comic features Hawk and Animal framed by the dreaded Dr. Rancid and Mr. Dart! The action will have you on the ropes!

AWESOME ENTERTAINMENT
May's *Supreme: The Return* will contain art from comic veterans such as Chris Sprouse, Jim Starlin and Brent Anderson (*Astro City*).

CALIBER PRESS
In April, Caliber's Gary Reed and Mark Bloodworth explore the shocking details of England's most notorious serial killer in the *Jack the Ripper* one-shot.

CHAOS! COMICS
Chaos! already has the Undertaker. Now Smiley hits the canvas in April's *Smiley the Psychotic Button's Whacky Wrestling Special*. The ring may never be the same.

CRUSADE ENTERTAINMENT
Daredevil, Elektra, the Thing and the Hulk all join the *Battlebooks* world in April, letting people play through some of the greatest comic book scuffles of all time.

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK—MANGA

DARK HORSE COMICS
Super-writer Frank Miller collaborates with *Watchmen* artist Dave Gibbons for the 112-page

cont'd →

MILLER COMMITTED TO NEW 'SIN'

Mega-popular series returns with brand-new characters

Superstar creator Frank Miller is getting back to the streets.

After switching gears and finding success with last year's ancient Greek *300* tale, Miller returns to the realm of bare-knuckled badmen in his newest *Sin City* offering, *Hell and Back*. And for Miller, this series figures to be his longest Sin yet.

"This is going to be somewhere between seven and nine issues," Miller said of the new Dark Horse Comics series, scheduled for a July release. "I've finished four issues, and it's still gaining steam, so I'll let it be as long as it wants to be."

Miller will introduce a new protagonist in *Hell and Back*'s pages. "Wallace is a bit different from most of the heroes you've met so far," Miller said. "This guy can kick ass better than most, because of his military training. He's an unbeatable fighter. Still, there are several familiar faces for longtime *Sin City* readers. These series do overlap."

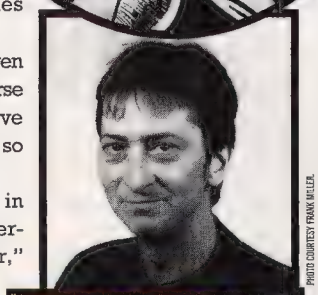
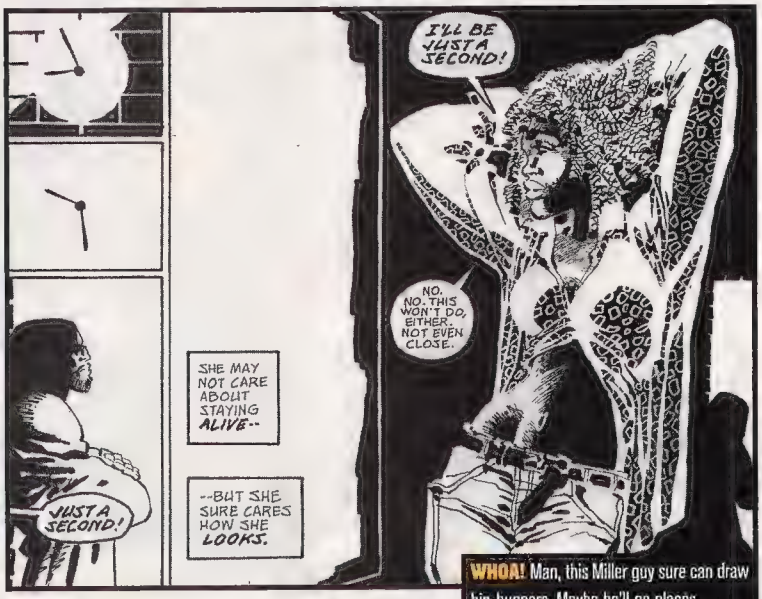


PHOTO COURTESY FRANK MILLER.

WHY'S THIS MAN SMILING? Miller's new *Sin City* is kinda like "X-Files." Except it won't drag on for, oh, SIX FRIGGIN' YEARS.

The genesis for Miller's current project actually came from a idea he's had for several years. "I finally found the right venue," he said. "Essentially, it's a boy-meets-girl, boy-loses-girl story, but with a conspiracy angle. I guess what I'm after here is 'The X-Files,' but with a punch line."

After temporarily leaving the genre of crime fiction, Miller now returns to his black-and-white world a refreshed man. "I think I've recharged my batteries," he said. "I feel like I climbed Mount Everest with *300*. Coming back to *Sin City*, even though it's full of its own challenges, is a little like coming home. I know all these people, I know what I'm playing with. It's a bad neighborhood, but it's definitely nice to be back." ■ SCOTT BRICK



WHOA! Man, this Miller guy sure can draw hip-huggers. Maybe he'll go places.

HORROR/SCI-FI MASTER JOE ORLANDO DIES

'Crypt' keeper also served as DC editor

Celebrated comic book artist and editor Joe Orlando died Dec. 23, 1998, in New York City at the age of 71, ending a 30-year struggle with heart problems.

Orlando first achieved fame as an artist at EC Comics, drawing horror and science fiction books, notably *Tales from the Crypt*. Arguably his most important work was "Judgment Day," an acclaimed parable of racial justice published in 1953. Orlando became a DC Comics editor in 1968, and helped create such characters as the spooky Cain for DC's *House of Mystery*, while also making readers laugh with the Hollywood parodies "Scenes We'd Like To See" in *Mad*.

"Joe Orlando was an artist who conjured human emotion with his brush strokes," DC Executive Vice President and Publisher Paul Levitz said. "He loved to scare, to thrill, to inspire and, most of all, to make people laugh. He taught a generation of us how to do our best work."

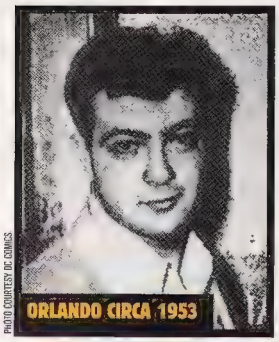

ORLANDO CIRCA 1953

PHOTO COURTESY DC COMICS

Writer David Michelinie agreed. "I wrote maybe 100 stories for Joe," recalled Michelinie. "And I can't think of a single time when he treated me unfairly, or without kindness and respect. That in itself would be a legacy most men could be proud of. But it's not enough for Joe Orlando. Because Joe did more than treat me well—he *taught* me well."

A scholarship has been established at the School of Visual Arts, where Orlando taught for many years. Donations made out to "Joe Orlando Scholarship Fund" may be sent to the school at 209 E. 23rd St., New York, NY 10010. ■ **TRENT D. McNEELEY**

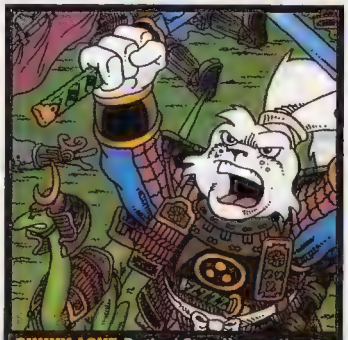
'USAGI YOJIMBO' HITS THE BOOKS IN PORTLAND

Hitting the books just got easier, thanks to comics.

Students of Japanese history at Portland State University are using Dark Horse Comics' *Usagi Yojimbo*, created by Stan Sakai, as part of their curriculum. Professor Antonia Levi uses the meticulously researched comics to explore often-confusing ancient myths. Usagi Yojimbo focuses on a samurai rabbit in feudal Japan in the 16th century. Using anthropomorphic characters (animals acting like humans), Sakai bases some of his stories on traditional Japanese legends.

"[Some] translators write in convoluted sentences, the translation of names is awkward, and they slip into Latin whenever they get to the naughty bits," Levi said. "Stan's version brought [the legends] to life in a way reading the originals doesn't."

Sakai couldn't be more flattered, but this isn't the first time *Usagi Yojimbo* has been used in higher education. Some students have done doctoral theses on Sakai's characters and books. It's all about showing what the medium can do. "I try to give talks at libraries and universities, places outside the norm for comics," Sakai said. "Anything to open new venues, to get new readers." ■ **TRENT D. McNEELEY**


BUNNY LOVE Portland State U. uses *Usagi* in its curriculum. So what's that samurai bunny so pissed about?

Martha Washington Saves the World trade paperback in April... Classic black-and-white *Star Wars* stories by Chris Claremont, Klaus Janson and Jo Duffy are reprinted in April's *Classic Star Wars: A Long Time Ago*... The 96-page *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back Manga #4* features the epic lightsaber battle between Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader. Check it out in April.

DC COMICS

Superstar painter Alex Ross provides the cover for March's *Superman/Fantastic Four* big honkin' tabloid-size one-shot... April sees a super-sized *Preacher* #50 which includes a "Preacher Gallery" section featuring pin-ups by artists such as Joe Quesada (*Daredevil*) and Jim Lee (*Divine Right*)... July's *Resurrection Man* #28 will be the series' final issue.

SUPERMAN/FANTASTIC FOUR

EXILED STUDIO

Scott Lobdell and Greg LaRocque bring the ongoing series *CryBaby* to life in April.

FANTAGRAPHICS

Barry Windsor-Smith returns to comics with *Adastra in Africa*, an April-release 56-page graphic novel featuring Adastra, one of his characters from the previous *BWS: Storyteller*. The hardcover-only volume is $15 unsigned or $25 for a signed limited edition.

HARRIS COMICS

Black Panther artist Mark Texeira contributes a Pantha backup story to April's *Vampirella: World's End* #2 (which is issue #14 of monthly *Vampirella* comic).

IMAGE COMICS

• Avalon Studios
Don't be afraid of the dark! April's *Aria* #4 comes available with a glow-in-the-dark cover by stunning artist Jay Anacleto.
• Bright Anvil Studios
Monster Fighters Inc. brings the monster-hunting adventures of five superpowered teens in April.
• Highbrow
The recently released *Savage Dragon Archives* #2 provides a key to the future as April's *Savage Dragon* #60 stems from events revealed therein. Writer/artist Erik Larsen handles the chores.
• Top Cow Comics
April's *Tales of the Witchblade* #1 is written by the *Fathom* writing team of Michael Turner and Bill O'Neil and features a one-in-four variant cover by Turner.

cont'd ——>

MEET THE 'RISING STARS'

"Babylon 5" creator Joseph Michael Straczynski has landed an artistic partner for *Rising Stars*, his 24-issue mini-series debuting from Top Cow Productions this July. Meet Keu Cha, a newcomer with *Tomb Raider/Witchblade* #1/2 under his belt.

Straczynski also has 113 characters who—as the result of an extraterrestrial energy flash—grew up together with superpowers in the small town of Pederson, Ill., as his *Rising Stars* cast. Here's a sneak peek at the first two 'Stars to roll off the line. Art is by Cha, and comments by Straczynski.

Poet (shown below):

"Although it is not exclusively his story, *Rising Stars* is often told from Poet's point of view as frequent narrator.

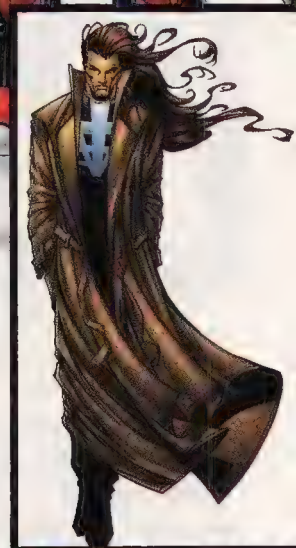
"He has a shy nature, in substantial contrast to the fact that he is possessed of one of the more violent powers. He hates the part of himself that is violent, but is driven to use his powers in a good cause.

"Poet is someone that everyone else affected by the flash feels they can come to. Good guy or bad—or somewhere in between—he's everyone's big brother."

Flagg (above):

"Jason Miller is a true believer, a patriot-hero who believes in the American Way in a terribly sincere way. Of all the characters, he's probably the most typical superhero type, a high school football star who never quite left the playing field. His powers are exclusively physical: terrific strength, endurance and [he's] damned hard to hurt.

"He wants to use his abilities to make a difference, but doesn't have the resources. So he gets involved with a big corporation, which can claim the PR value of having such an individual in their employ. Gradually, he begins to sell out inch by inch. So he's trapped in a struggle of conscience, not just against his situation, but against himself. He wonders what happened to his fire, and how he fell so far, so easily." ■ NACHIE CASTRO



HI, NEIGHBOR! Flagg (above) and Po (below) are two of 113 superpowere people living in the same town? Uhhhh-hu

HULK SMASH PUNY SUPERHUMAN

Ah, compare and contrast. It's always a fun game. Take May's *Hulk/Superman* 48-page one-shot, for example.

The bookshelf-format project features the talents of writer Roger Stern (*Action Comics*) and penciler Steve Rude (*Nexus*). Set in the early days of each character's superheroic career, the intellectual reader will find plenty of stimulation. "Until you put the two characters together, you don't realize the differences and the similarities," Stern explained. "The story explores what happens when these two guys meet, because unbeknownst to one another, they're both leading double lives. And yet Superman's already a huge celebrity, whereas no one is too happy to have the Hulk around."

The story, of course, also features a fight between the two heavies. And Marvel Editor Tom Brevoort contrasts with this simpler philosophy: "It's two big bruisers beatin' the crap out of each other. You can't go wrong." After all, the classics never go out of style. ■ SCOTT A. AUBREY

HAWKINS FINDS HIS LUCKY 'LADY'

It's any professional's dream... you work hard, pay your dues, come up with a great idea, then BAM! You're a comics success story!

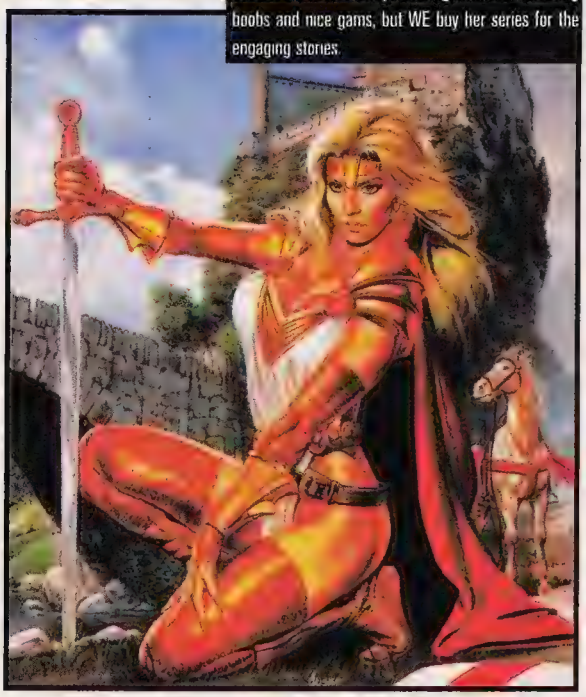
Such is the life of Matt Hawkins, whose *Lady Pendragon* title from Image Comics will go monthly this April. Hawkins spent several years working alongside Rob Liefeld at Awesome Comics as both editor and marketing coordinator before hitting on the idea behind *Lady Pendragon*—a modern take on the King Arthur mythos with Queen Guinevere as the heroine.

After a 1996 one-shot, Hawkins put out a 1998 mini-series that virtually guaranteed Guinevere's exploits would go monthly.

"The response to it was great," Hawkins said. "The plan had been for an ongoing series all along, but it was great to get the confirmation."

Lady Pendragon #1 will begin a series of six-issue story arcs, the first to be titled 'Dragonblade' and drawn by John Stinsman. It will pick up on events from the mini-series, wherein Excalibur's return to Earth wiped out the electromagnetic field. "There was essentially an Armageddon without nuclear war," he said. "The ongoing series will deal with what happens next." ■ SCOTT BRICK

SWORD FIGHT! Lady Pendragon MIGHT have big boobs and nice gams, but WE buy her series for the engaging stories.

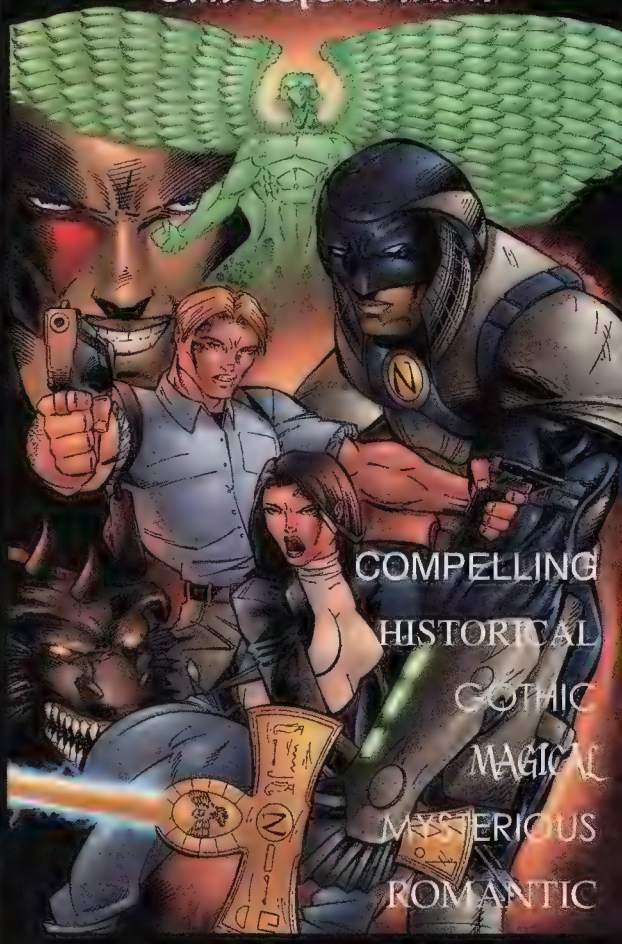


contestwinners

LUCKY STIFFS

- Adam J. Monetta of Hicksville, N.Y., strolled off with a bitchin' Bowen Designs Daredevil statue and Joe Quesada/Jimmy Palmiotti Daredevil original art as the winner of *Wizard* #88's "Marvel Knights Word Jumble!" contest!
- Matt Hughes of Greenville, S.C., won more Marvel Supernaturals and Ghost Rider hoo-hah than you can shake a flaming skull at as the winner in the "Recruit the New Supernatural!" contest in *Wizard* #88.

When the Army of Darkness shadows the Earth, the chosen one will cast our fate by facing the evil before him.



Prophecy of the SOUL SORCERER™

The battle for our souls begins in May from

As seen on TV

IN COLOR

Distributed by Diamond Comic Distributors, Inc.
24 Page Color Preview available at
www.soulsorcerer.com
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NEWS & NOTES

MARVEL COMICS

Marvel goes retro in April by reprinting the classic *Amazing Spider-Man* #121-#122 in the Death of Gwen Stacy trade paperback. (Psst! Gwen dies at the end!)

PENNY FARTHING PRESS

April brings some light to the past of Professor FitzRandolph in the pages of *The Victonan* #2. Over in *Decoy* #2, we find the presumed-dead Luck to be alive and well–and very confused.

DECOY

SIRIUS ENTERTAINMENT

Dawn: Return of the Goddess #1 will also be available in a limited edition in April. A mere 5,000 alternate-cover copies are signed and numbered by creator Joseph Michael Linsner.

SLAVE LABOR GRAPHICS

Captain Dingleberry moves to Slave Labor and cranks up a smelly new mini-series in April.

VIZ COMICS

Privacy be damned when Viz reprints *Voyeur* manga stories from its monthly anthology *Pulp* in a 232-page, black-and-white graphic novel. This adults-only paperback hits in April and concerns two men who enjoy spying on people's private moments.

READ ALL ABOUT IT!

Even more stories are available on Wizard World Online! Check these out at:

www.wizardworld.com

Roger Stern and John Byrne fill in Marvel's missing history....Comics' Flaming Carrot takes on a real carrot!...David Mack launches a *Kabuki* spin-off....Todd Dezago and Mike Wieringo go for a new Image series....Kitchen Sink Press ceases publishing operations...and DC's *Manhunter* rides again with new pages!

LEE HUNTS VAMPIRES

'Darkminds' creator to do fantasy comic

Creator Pat Lee's red-hot Image Comics' mini-series *Darkminds* drew comparisons to Japanese animation films "Akira" and "Ghost in the Shell."

So it's no surprise that Lee will focus on other anime traditions—like war-torn fantasy worlds and blood-sucking creatures of the night—for his next project. "We wanted to give [this project] more of a *Dungeons & Dragons* feel," Lee said of the as-yet-untitled Image comic. "Fantasy for the people that love it."

"Buffy The Vampire Slayer" fans take note: the eight-issue June-launch mini-series is centered on a vampire's coming-of-age. "The plot is about a young vampire who's trying to find out a bit about his past," Lee said. Still, don't expect any goopy teen romances or vampire-slaying high school nymphets. This new series won't be much cheerier in tone than *Darkminds* was.

The *Darkminds* creative team will again be intact for this project with Lee handling both story and art, and Adrian Tsang co-writing and scripting. Despite those consistent elements, Lee said he is hoping for something with a completely unique flavor for the fantasy series.

"People are asking for more Darkminds," Lee said. "We want to take a break and do something new." Fans of that series needn't fret, however, as *Darkminds Volume 2* is tentatively scheduled to begin as soon as the vampire book is complete. In the meantime, a *Darkminds* spin-off mini-series featuring the Neon Dragons gang, with artwork by Dreamwave cohort Lou Kang, debuts in June. ■ DEAN SIMAKIS

THUMBING OFF

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

THUMBS UP

'NO MAN'S LAND': This story puts the "dark" in Dark Knight, with a ravaged Gotham reduced to a lawless city divided by gangs. Batman, MIA for three months, fights gadgetless. Commissioner Gordon crosses over the line to keep order and severs ties with the Dark Knight. Gotham's populace, short on food and supplies, eats its dogs and trades for premiums such as flashlight batteries. We've never seen a story that totally redefines the boundaries of a character and his universe like this.

'THOR': Just when we thought this book couldn't get any better comes the three-part "Dark Wars" kicking off in *Thor* #10. In it, Thor not only finds out who's behind Asgard's ruin, but gets his ass trounced in the process, uncontrollably transforming into Jake Olson! We can't wait to see how it's gonna end!

'SLINGERS': Want great teen angst? Try *Slingers*. Between Ricochet's problems with his dad, Hornet's shame from dealing with cerebral palsy, Protege's superiority complex and Dusk's mysterious resurrection, *Slingers* deserves to be selling better.

THUMBS DOWN

'WILDCATS' #1: We bought into the hype of all-out action, self-contained stories and great art. We got the awesome art, but the story was light on plot (20 pages about Grifter stealing Spartan's money really dragged) and was "to be continued." We might wait two months for Travis Charest's art, but not a sprawling saga.

STAN LEAVES MARVEL: What is Marvel thinking? Allowing corporate icon Stan Lee out of his "lifetime contract" to do his own thing is like Kellogg's letting go of Tony the Tiger or like *Playboy* letting go of Hugh Hefner.

'ARIA' IN COLOR: Previews of Jay Anacleto's lushly detailed pencil work in Aria bowled us over. But now we've seen it...and the coloring on top of his pencil art completely wash out the Anacleto's magic greytones. Image released an "all-pencil" version of *Aria* #1, but we hope it just drops the color entirely.

licensetodrive

PROPERTY FOR SALE

Topps recently announced that it is leaving the comics 'biz for the foreseeable future. That leaves the company's coveted "X-Files" and "Xena" comic licenses up for grabs. Here's a look at where those licenses will go, along with a few other hot properties that could translate well into comics.

PROPERTY: *Tomb Raider*
IN CONTROL: Eidos Interactive
THE SCOOP: According to Sutton Trout, creative director for Eidos, no comic adventures of *Tomb Raider*'s Lara Croft are planned past the just-released team-up with *Witchblade*'s Sara Pezzini. "Beyond that, we don't know," Trout said. "But we do have a continued relationship with Top Cow."

PROPERTY: "The X-Files"
IN CONTROL: 20th Century Fox
THE SCOOP: Because "The X-Files" creator Chris Carter's schedule is overwhelming, Fox won't be looking for someone new to license the property for comics. "It's not a priority right now," Debbie Olsham, coordinator of worldwide publishing for 20th Century Fox said. "We'll reassess the situation six months down the line."

PROPERTY: *Metal Gear Solid*
IN CONTROL: Konami
THE SCOOP: According to publicist Rita Tennyson, there are no comic plans in the near future for video game hit *Metal Gear Solid*. "There's been talk of a movie, and we are doing action figures," Tennyson said, "but no comics."

PROPERTY: "Xena: Warrior Princess"
IN CONTROL: Universal
THE SCOOP: Welcome back to comics, baby. After a brief, but heated, war of the proposals, Dark Horse Comics has landed the *Xena* comic license. The publisher plans an August release for its first books, and close ties to the tube. "The events of the comic will closely parallel the events of the show next season," Dark Horse Editor Scott Allie said.

PROPERTY: "South Park"
IN CONTROL: Comedy Central
THE SCOOP: Forget it. Comedy Central representatives have repeatedly stated that cartoon sensation "South Park" is geared for adults. And comics are for kids. "At this time, we're just not pursuing that interest," Comedy Central publicist Cheryl Smith said. ■ **SCOTT A. AUBREY**

TOMB RAIDER PHOTO ©PRIMA PUBLISHING; TRADEMARK OF CORE DESIGN. "THE X-FILES" PHOTO BY MICHAEL LAVINE ©20TH CENTURY FOX. METAL GEAR SOLID PHOTO ©KONAMI. "XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS" PHOTO ©UNIVERSAL TELEVISION ENTERPRISES, INC. "SOUTH PARK" PHOTO ©COMEDY CENTRAL

TODD BUYS EXPENSIVE BIG MAC?

Baseball's Mark McGwire goes deep into the stands. Spawn creator/sports fanatic and former college baseball player Todd McFarlane has deep pockets. Put them together and McFarlane is grabbing headlines again. Even if he doesn't want them.

McFarlane is reported by cable network MSNBC to be the anonymous buyer of St. Louis Cardinals slugger Mark McGwire's record-setting 70th home run ball, a baseball artifact that realized $3 million at an auction in January.

McFarlane himself could not be reached for confirmation, but Todd McFarlane Productions Publisher and spokesman Beau Smith denied the MSNBC report, and offered this tongue-in-cheek comment: "I realize that MSNBC said that stuff. Hell, I sat there and watched it myself. But if you call any of the McFarlane offices, you'll get the same comment: Todd has no balls. Period. That's it." ■ **JIM McLAUCHLIN**

LAST WOMAN STANDING

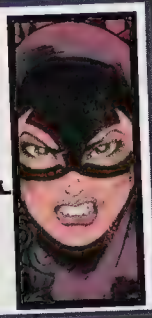
comic battles you never thought you'd see

BLACK WIDOW VS. CATWOMAN

THE COMBATANTS

TALE OF THE TAPE

5'7"	HEIGHT	5' 7"
125 lbs.	WEIGHT	125 lbs.
67"	REACH	67"
Stalingrad U.S.S.R.	HOMETOWN	Gotham City, U.S.A.
36D	CUP SIZE	38DD
Borscht	SNACK	Milk



A brilliant scholar and athlete, Natasha Romanova was transformed into a KGB spy called the Black Widow. After a few assignments in the United States, Natasha cut her Russian ties and now uses her spy training and electro-blast "Widow's Bite," to combat evil as the Black Widow!

Orphaned at a young age by a suicidal mother and an alcoholic father, Selina Kyle grew up on Gotham's mean streets where she became the city's most accomplished cat burglar, avoiding capture from Gotham's police and the hero Batman himself. Armed with nothing more than a skin-tight outfit and a bullwhip, Catwoman's one kitten with claws!

tha winnah... Deftly sneaking out of the Gotham Museum of Natural History with the diamond-studded Cheshire Crown in hand, Catwoman smiles at another clean getaway, crawls out the skylight and runs smack into a less-than-pleased Black Widow. A swift kick to the solar-plexus and Catwoman's on her back staring up at the grinning Widow. Like a caged animal gone berserk, Catty scratches at the Widow with her razor-sharp claws inflicting minor surface damage. As Natasha goes to push the attack, Catwoman whips out her cat-o'-nine-tails, snagging Natasha's legs and bringing her down. Some quick jabs, a few swift kicks and even a hair pull or two later, the Widow gets the clear upper hand and prepares for the finishing blow. Knowing when to lick her wounds and run, Catwoman manages to slink free and heads down a back alley. Not wanting to break a sweat, Natasha takes aim and lets loose her "Widow's Bite," stunning the fleeing Kyle, and claiming her ninth and final life.

this month's battle drawn by JIM BALENT

INVISI

FREEDOM TERRORISTS In *Invisibles*, every conspiracy is true, and it takes the team of Ragged Robin (center) and (clockwise from top left) Jack Frost, Boy, Lord Fanny and King Mob to stop 'em.

LEMAN

WRITER GRANT MORRISON COUNTS DOWN TO THE END OF THE WORLD IN THE CONSPIRACY-RIDDLED UNIVERSE OF 'THE INVISIBLES'

Grant Morrison's inspiration for *The Invisibles* came in Nepal. On a mountain. With an alien. "I had what seemed to be an alien encounter experience," the 39-year-old Scottish writer says. "It was for real; the thing happened. I experienced another reality; I had no idea what it was. *The Invisibles* became a way to make sense of it, and it tied into what was going on at the end of the century...lots of reports of abductions and satanic abuse and lots of weird stuff."

Morrison might convey this in soft-spoken tones, but his conviction is clear: His close encounter of the third kind really happened. And that's what his *Invisibles* series is all about—aliens, mind-boggling conspiracies and gun-toting terrorists. Think "The X-Files" meets James Bond. "It's a comic about everything," says Morrison of his creator-owned Vertigo series. "Action, philosophy, paranoia, sex, magic, biography, travel, drugs, religion, UFOs."

Entering its third of three series in March, *Invisibles Vol. 3* will run 12 issues and promises to wrap up all the crazy plotlines, reveal the secrets behind its greatest conspiracies, and gear up for a climactic conclusion—literally, the end of the world.

***The Invisibles* is not just weird** for weirdness' sake. There's a great, big, epic story being told through the three different series and 60-plus issues. You see, unbeknownst to us, humanity is being manipulated by other-dimensional demons called the Archons, agents of total control who are trying to enslave everything—governments, corporations, even our children. As a new century dawns, the Archons are systematically planning Armageddon so they can overwhelm our universe.

On the other side are the Invisibles: an ancient, secret network of freedom fighters dedicated to the liberation of humankind. Anarchists, outcasts, occult terrorists, witches—they oppose all forms of tyranny and ignorance, either alone or in activist cells which strike at every part of the Archon conspiracy.

No, it's not superheroes in spandex, but it is non-stop, "who can you trust?" action-adventure. "It's the adventures of James Bond of the counterculture," says Morrison, "a story about five terrorists who fight what they see as a huge occult conspiracy to control human freedom." These five terrorists form the activist group followed in the pages of *The Invisibles*. Led by King Mob, a master assassin and expert in psychic and occult arts, the group also includes Lord Fanny, a South American transvestite shaman; Ragged Robin, a psychic witch from the future; Boy, a female martial artist and former Harlem street cop; and the youngest member of the team, Jack Frost, a violent British anarchist with telekinetic powers and supernatural ties which could make him the next messiah. Together, the five blow up government installations, combat skinless ghouls and mind-controlling demons, call upon paranormal spirits, time travel—whatever it takes to thwart the Archons' schemes.

Though he writes the mainstream superhero fare of DC's *JLA*, Morrison tags *The Invisibles* as his personal pet project. "*The Invisibles* is more like real life, while *JLA*'s great fun," Morrison says. "*Invisibles* is the laboratory and *JLA* is the tennis court."

Morrison does his "laboratory" research by traveling worldwide and gathering material in fringe science books and weird occult material to fuel his plots. Some find these plots confusing and trippy, while others tend to find the challenges of *The Invisibles* rewarding.

Ironically, the series is so personal that it became like a pseudo-diary for Morrison. The more he wrote, the more real the book seemed, "to the point where things that would happen to characters would then happen to me three months later. I almost died after King Mob went through a kind of interrogation." During this interrogation scene in issue #17 of the first series, Archon agents torture King Mob by mutilating his face, and he suffers from a punctured lung. Two months after writing that scene, Morrison got an abscess in his cheek and was hospitalized for a collapsed lung. "The more I tried to understand what happened to me, the more the book became like reality, and the more I was led into [actually] meeting weird shamanic transvestites and freedom fighters from America's west. Suddenly, *Invisibles* became real life."

BY MIKE SEARLE

INSANE ASYLUM

Top 10 strangest ideas in *The Invisibles*

In a book where every conspiracy and paranoid delusion is real, here are the weirdest, rock-your-brain concepts floating around:

10. JOHN LENNON AS GOD Using sacramental LSD, King Mob contacts the psychedelic god of music, John Lennon, for spiritual guidance.

9. MIND TRAVEL Using a time-traveling windmill, the Invisibles psychically project themselves back to the French Revolution to rescue one of their allies, the perverted sadist Marquis de Sade, and bring him forward in time.

8. HEAD GAMES The Biblical prophet John the Baptist's zombie head is hooked up to a machine and serves as an engine of prophecy. The only problem? It speaks the eternal language of the angels, an unconscious language, and says something different to all who listen to it.

7. CITY VIRUS Each of us is infected with a city virus, which utilizes technology and urbanization to replicate itself. Eventually cities will devour the host body (Earth), so the virus persuades us to build rockets for colonization of other worlds.

6. GOD, PRISONER OF EARTH When Oppenheimer, creator of the atom bomb and priest of the evil god Azathoth, dropped the first nuclear bomb, its purpose was to tear a hole in our reality. Which it did, 'cause in fell God, the Creator of our universe, or something very much like it. U.S scientists then captured, probed and tested it.

5. LIQUID SOFTWARE Scientists of the near future have discovered a way to record information onto water molecules. Imagine buying the Encyclopaedia Britannica in a can, drinking your favorite book or jumping through time in a machine powered by liquid components.

4. PSYCHIC DIMENSIONAL TRAVEL Faced with a bomb that explodes in their faces, King Mob and Ragged Robin psychically transport to their physical bodies in another dimension, where they arrive unharmed.

3. THE HAND OF GLORY A mysterious, glowing-green, severed hand, perhaps part of some otherworldly machine, it is empowered by bodily fluids and is used to warp reality and open gateways in time.

2. VIRTUAL REALITY CRACK An evil corporation creates a special crack cocaine with crystals that act as radio receivers in the victim's body. The corp execs put on virtual reality-like glasses which synchronize their brain wave activity to the crystals' frequency, allowing them to seize control of the drug user.

1. KILLER WORDS There are actually 64 letters in the alphabet, not 26. With these extra, alien letters, a single spoken word can confuse the brain, cause cancer or kill an entire army on the spot. ■ MS

Real life as the Invisibles know it ends on December 22, 2012. That's the date for Armageddon in *The Invisibles*, a date Morrison unearthed by means of the Mayan calendar and theorist Terence McKenna's time wave theory—both of which, remarkably enough, peg the end of the world for that same date. In similarly apocalyptic fashion, the third *Invisibles* series begins a countdown to the end of the world, and its own end, in reverse order from #12 (the first issue) to #1. It's no coincidence that the last issue of *The Invisibles* will be released in January 2000.

So what's in store for the third volume of *The Invisibles*? Issue #12 kicks off the first major story arc, "Satanstorm," all across the world, with sequences in England, North Africa and India. The whole team has split up after their experiences in America, which occurred at the end of the second series. They're gallivanting about the world, off doing their own things, when they're called back for one last mission: to stop a hideous creature spawned by the Archons from ascending to the English throne during a total eclipse in '99. It's a pivotal moment. If the creature gets crowned king, the world will fall to the dark side in 2012; if the creature doesn't, there's a chance we can all be spared come world's end.

Don't expect to see the same ol' Invisibles team in the third series, either. By the end of the second series, Ragged Robin had returned to the future in a time machine, and Boy had resigned, not able to take the pressure. As a result, a familiar face to Invisibles' fans joins the team—Jolly Roger, a lesbian commando who wears an eye patch and kills people faster than a well-oiled Terminator. For the fifth team member, a new character is introduced into the ranks: Helga, a rocket scientist pretending to be a French model.

As issue #11 opens up, the Invisibles team comes together and starts planning how they're going to stop the Archons' dark coronation plan. A key part of the plan would involve Jack Frost, but he's still missing; he's enduring one final test to see if he's the future messiah by being stuck

alone on a jet plane at 15,000 feet.

Next, Morrison promises *Invisibles* #10 is the "things go wrong" issue. Betrayal and disaster are just around the corner as the team fully reunites and finishes plotting how to defeat the Archons' royal creature. Division X, the secret British paranormal investigation squad, makes an appearance when one of its members, Jack Flint, crosses over and becomes an Invisible.

As the first story arc concludes, issue #9 guarantees a major revelation about the whole series—who the Invisibles really are and what's actually been going on. Despite a complex story rich with subplots, Morrison insists all will be revealed—the conspiracies surrounding the Archons, the weird alien satellite which contacts Jack Frost from time to time, even the very secret of the universe—by the final issue #1. "What we've been doing is looking at all the crazy things at the end of the 20th century and trying to tie them up into the biggest conspiracy of all, which is gonna be revealed at the end of the series," says Morrison. "The whole thing's a big occult mystery; if you're into what life means, what the end of the world means and why the world is the way it is, you're gonna dig this series."

With enough conspiracies to make an "X-Files" fanatic's head spin, does *The Invisibles*' creator really believe in them? "I think there are lots of little conspiracies that go on," says Morrison. "I wanted to throw every one possible into *The Invisibles*." And there certainly are some wild cover-ups and hidden agendas in the book—the AIDS virus was planned by the U.S. government, which holds the cure; psychic UFO pilots beam ads directly into our brains; a British detention home lobotomizes its juvenile delinquents to fit in with society again; there are 23 American concentration camps for "enemies of the state"—so many twists and turns, in fact, that you never really know what's real.

What you can trust is that *The Invisibles*' five-year-long journey will finally be coming to an end as the year 2000 dawns.

However, as with all good conspiracies, it's never truly the end. There's a movie deal in the works, and scripts have already been written for a British TV show, although no dates have been set. After a few months of rest, Morrison is thinking about spinning King Mob off into a new series and is contemplating penning a book about his experiences while writing *The Invisibles*.

But before his future projects, Morrison has to end the Invisibles' world riding into the new millennium. Will the grand payoff for *The Invisibles* really be the end of the world? In ultimate conspirator fashion, Grant Morrison teases: "It's gonna be the Apocalypse you've dreamed of. A happy ending with lots of death."

Mike Searle monitors every move of the Wizard *editors for the Cause by pretending to be the editor of their sister publication,* InQuest Gamer.

CONSPIRACY THEORY *Invisibles* makes "The X-Files" look like kid's stuff. In one story, the team learned of extra letters in the alphabet that can kill you with but a sound.

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RED DAWN

The 10 things you've always wanted to know about Dawn, but were afraid to ask

By Jim McLauchlin

YOU KNOW DAWN ALREADY—YOU JUST DON'T REALIZE IT.

Every culture and every religion this world has ever known has a goddess who represents life and birth. To the Greeks, she was Aphrodite. Egyptians called her Isis. To some, she's Mother Nature. But for comic creator Joseph Michael Linsner, she's Dawn.

Linsner has taken the concept of "mother goddess" from every myth he could find, thrown the myths into a blender and poured out the shapely figure before you. Come April, the red-haired goddess is back in Sirius Entertainment's four-part mini-series *Dawn: The Return of the Goddess*, which sees Dawn investigating a series of witch murders in the hope of bringing the killer to justice.

But with a mere seven-and-a-half issues containing Dawn stories (*Dawn* #1/2, *Drama* and the six-part *Lucifer's Halo*), and 14 more where she merely appeared on a cover or acted as an "emcee" for other tales, not too much is really known of Linsner's Dawn. There are still a lot of unanswered questions. That's where we come in.

A new Dawn is rising. Consider this your wake-up call.

Okay, she's a goddess. So what are her "powers"?

At this point, they're rather undefined. All we know is that she's a heavy hitter.

Lucifer's Halo takes its name from a trip Dawn took in that series. She was asked by no less a presence than God himself to journey to Hell and retrieve the halo of the fallen angel Lucifer. Both God and Lucifer treated Dawn with respect—and when Dawn simply asked for Lucifer's halo, the fallen angel eventually gave it up.

We also know that Dawn can easily travel between Heaven, Earth and Hell. As a goddess of birth, we can assume she has power over life and death. Beyond that, Linsner promises real definition soon. "A lot will be revealed and defined in *Return of the Goddess*," he says. "This may sound like a coy avoidance of a 'real' answer, but trust me—it'll be much more fun to read in the series. And there are definitely a few surprises in store."

NATURE GIRL Dawn is considered a Mother Goddess. Betcha never thought "Mother Nature" looked like THIS.

What's up with her look? Why's it always changing?

"It seems to me," Linsner says, "that Dawn appears to

different people the way they most need her to."

When Dawn met a confused young man named Darrian Ashoka in *Lucifer's Halo*, Linsner says Darrian was "in need of direction. What he needed was a lover—an equal, someone who would set him on his quest for purpose." So Dawn appeared as Darrian thought a lover should…as a hot babe. Later, when Dawn went to Hell to retrieve the halo, she was acting as an ambassador of sorts. She appeared in a formal gown, looking absolutely regal. And she'll take on even more new looks in the future.

"In *Return of the Goddess*, it's Dawn's worshipers who are calling out for her," Linsner states. "And they need vengeance. Dawn will appear in the aspect of herself most able to deal that vengeance—the Goddess as avenging warrior. Think of Kali the Destroyer in Hindu myth or the Valkyries of Norse myth. She'll be a force to be reckoned with."

But regardless of her getup, some things in Dawn's appearance are always consistent—like the three-teardrop scheme on her left eye and the chains and roses on her wrists.

TOUCH OF DEATH Dawn's distinctive "tears" were her price for knowledge.

So what's with that three-teardrop thing?

Think of it as a scar that Death left.

The tears didn't appear on Dawn's face until after she met Death in *Drama*. Before this meeting, which happened near the beginning of time, Dawn was an empty vessel—innocent and naive, almost totally lacking in knowledge. She needed to know about Heaven and Hell, about what joy and sorrow were and what her future held. Death agreed to give her this knowledge. But all knowledge has a price. Death, who loved life (and thus, loved Dawn), wanted to touch Dawn in exchange for this knowledge.

The touch of Death leaves a mark, and Dawn's teardrops are that mark. She wears them to this day.

What about the chains around one wrist and roses around the other?

"It's all about balance," Linsner says. "As major a force as birth and rebirth is, it has to be governed by balance. The chains and roses symbolize two opposing forces. The chains symbolize Heaven, the roses symbolize Hell."

In Linsner's world, Heaven is a place of rigid order—hence the chains. And God wears chains around both of his wrists. Hell is a place where things grow wild, run dangerous and can prick you at any time—like the thorns of a rose. To symbolize this, Lucifer wears roses wrapped around both his arms.

Are the rumors true that Dawn really sprang from a lingerie doodle?

Yep! The legend is true! The story goes that Linsner was at a comic convention in the late 1980s and terribly bored. Having little to do, he started drawing in a sketchbook. He drew a skull. From there, he sketched another interlocking skull. He kept idly drawing more skulls until he realized he had a pattern. He thought the pattern might look cool as lingerie. "So I drew it into a lace corset, to be exact," Linsner says. "Dawn just grew from there."

So where can I find some Dawn back issues?

Dawn's comic history is a pretty short one. She's appeared in 1989's *Cry For Dawn* and 1996's *Crypt of Dawn*, two anthology titles from Cry For Dawn Productions and Sirius Entertainment, respectively. But all she really did there was make cover appearances or act as a narrator to introduce stories starring other characters.

As a character unto herself, Dawn first appeared in *Drama*, a 1994 one-shot. There, she met her opposite number—Death—and allowed Death to actually touch her in exchange for a glimpse of her future.

In that glimpse, Dawn saw part of what would happen in 1995's six-issue *Dawn: Lucifer's Halo* mini-series. Dawn guided Darrian, who was stuck in the middle of a struggle between Heaven and Hell. She protected Darrian, advised him, mothered him and got him through the conflict alive.

In the middle of *Lucifer's Halo*, Dawn took time out for *Dawn* #1/2. There, she brought Darrian a dream which showed him the nature of life and death.

SHE'S NEKKID! Dawn appears to people the way they want her to look. (This is how most like to see her.)

Looking to read up? It's a breeze. *Drama* and the entire six-issue mini-series are collected in the *Dawn: Lucifer's Halo* paperback, still in print from Sirius Entertainment.

What's the deal with her new series?

"The story opens just a few years in our future," Linsner says of the bimonthly *Dawn: The Return of the Goddess* mini-series. "A worldwide witchhunt and extermination is underway and no one knows who—or what—is behind it." Enter Dawn. "There are only a handful of witches left when one young witch offers her soul to the pagan Earth Mother [Dawn] in exchange for justice," Linsner continues. Dawn responds to the girl's sacrifice, setting out to find whoever's behind the genocide and get revenge.

In a nutshell—Mama's coming back, and she ain't happy.

What does Linsner have planned for Dawn's future?

"Dawn will always figure into my art in some way, but I want to work on other creations for a while so my interest in Dawn stays fresh," Linsner states. "I've seen comic characters grow stale. I don't ever want that to happen with Dawn."

But still, Linsner knows Dawn will always be around. "She's become very important to me," he says. "I couldn't get rid if her if I tried."

How devoted are Dawn fans?

They're a little more hardcore than your average Superman fan. "A lot of people seem to really identify with Dawn," Linsner says. "They definitely put the 'fanatic' back into 'fan.'"

Linsner has received "very deep, personal love letters from people I've never met." He also regularly gets photos in the mail from women who feel they look like Dawn, sometimes in a state of serious undress. And watch out at conventions.

At 1998's Wizard World Chicago, Linsner was rather publicly flashed by a woman with a Dawn tattoo on her upper thigh. And last year's Dragon*Con featured the first-ever Dawn Look-a-Like Contest (see sidebar), which drew over 40 entrants, all trying to look like Dawn. "It's terrific to feel that devotion from people," Linsner admits. "Makes me feel a little less alone in this great big universe of ours."

Get ready, ladies. The second Dawn Look-a-Like Contest is coming to 1999's Dragon*Con in Atlanta, Ga.

Is Dawn a true redhead?

Uh...well...gee, we sure as heck ain't gonna ask her! And Linsner thinks that a lady should have some secrets, too. "Only her hairdresser knows for sure," he laughs. "I don't think she'd tell me anyway. You ever try getting a straight answer out of a goddess?"

Anyway, now you're fully trained in Dawn lore, so you should be prepared to dive into April's *Return of the Goddess* series, no matter if you're natural or a dye-job. Enjoy. W

Jim McLauchlin, god of lax and relax, is the representation of all the "beer and pizza" deities. Or maybe he's just another fat guy.

DAWN LOOK-A-LIKE CONTEST

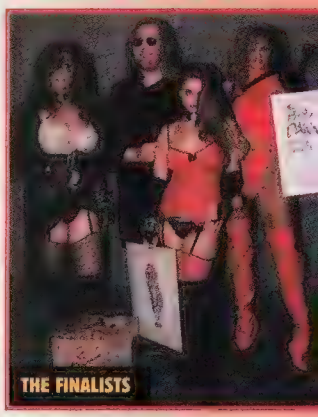
JOE AND HIS POSSE

In the eyes of Shannon McFarland, there's a lot to like about Dawn. "She's beautiful. She's a strong character," McFarland says. "And she dresses *so* well."

McFarland, a 30-something horse breeder from Atlanta, Ga., knows how to dress for success. She walked away the winner in 1998's Dragon*Con Dawn Look-a-Like Contest. McFarland netted the applause of a packed hotel ballroom audience—and a cool $1,000. But she says her participation wasn't about the dough. "The prize money was nice, but I did it just because I like Dawn and I like dressing up like that."

"Like that" meant custom, homemade, red latex armor to project a warrior aspect of Dawn. "I wanted to go with something that fit my person. And my being 6 feet tall, the armor seemed to work well."

The idea may've been good, but the execution was a bit of a problem. "The costume was an absolute nightmare," McFarland says. "I tried different methods to put it together, but as the contest approached, I ran out of time. I just wound up holding it together with Velcro."



THE FINALISTS

Despite the problems, the judges thought McFarland was the best in a field of more than 40 entrants. And she'll be back to defend her crown at 1999's Dragon*Con, possibly with a different look. "I love the armor," she says. "But I've seen Dawn with this low-riding, hip-hugger blue jeans look that I really love, too. I think she looks so cute like that."

But before prospective '99 con attendees start cruising the floor, a word of advice—park it in neutral. McFarland is happily married. And, just like last year, her husband will be only a short distance away. Which isn't to say there isn't just a *little* room in her heart for another guy. Meeting Dawn's creator was the highlight of McFarland's con experience. "Joseph Linsner is an absolute doll of a man," McFarland says. "He's so nice, so friendly and so sensitive."

McFarland felt she really connected with Linsner, just like she connects with a certain birth goddess she resembles. "I'm a horse breeder. I help bring life into the world," she says. "And I'm a mother myself. How could I not feel a kinship with Dawn?" ■ JM

THA' WINNAH!

PHOTOS BY PAUL SCHIRALDI.

TOMORR

COUNTDOWN TO WIZARD 2000

FUTURE SHOCK 21st century or not, it still takes almost a full year for an episode of "Batman Beyond" to be completed.

(OPENING PHOTO COURTESY OF WARNER BROS.)

ROW KNIGHT

The Dark Knight leaps to the future in the hit animated series "Batman Beyond"

By D.B. Nicholls and Patrick Sauriol
Photos by Robert Beck

Batman's finally met his match. No, it wasn't the Joker, the Penguin or the Riddler. Nope. His ultimate defeat came from...himself.

On the Caped Crusader's last outing, he suffered a mild heart attack. Bruce survived, but Batman didn't. That is, until a young upstart named Terry McGinnis entered the picture some 20 years later, stole Bruce's Bat-suit and became the all-new Batman.

No, you didn't miss the latest issue of DC's *Batman* comic. It's the newest project from the award-winning "Superman" and "Batman" animated producers Paul Dini, Bruce Timm and Alan Burnett. It's "Batman Beyond," and it's the next generation in the Dark Knight's evolution.

"The WB network wanted to make sure that Batman was accessible to all ages," says Dini of the smash-hit new series airing Saturday mornings on Kids WB!. "They felt that the classic Batman skewed to an older audience, and they wanted to see what would happen if we put the responsibility of being Batman not with an adult but with a kid. At first, we weren't sure how that idea was going to play, and then once we got into the idea, we really enjoyed it."

So just how different is this new Bat-series? Well, *Wizard* crashed the California-based Warner Bros. Animation Studios to get inside the Batcave.

THE NEW HEROES

Even though he hasn't donned his cape and cowl in decades, Bruce Wayne's still hanging in there. Age has slowed him down considerably, but Bruce can still hold his own. He just can't put on the costume anymore, so Batman basically fades into the night.

"When we meet Bruce, he's living this lonely, 'Citizen Kane'-like existence locked up in Wayne Manor, and his only companion is Ace, this huge, snarling devil dog," says Dini, twisting his hands in the air, narrowing his eyes, gritting his teeth and growling. "Everybody else he's known throughout the years, either in his crimefighting or personal life, has left him. They've either died, moved on or broken ties with him."

Heck, even when a good-hearted, young kid like Terry comes asking for Bruce's help, the secluded Wayne sends him away. Only after Terry takes matters into his own hands (i.e., he steals Bruce's souped-up Batsuit) and explains how his father was murdered does Bruce give in and eventually become Terry's mentor. And this new, younger Batman is nothing like his predecessor.

"He's like a James Dean, troubled teen character," says Timm, leaning forward in his chair. "He starts out with a real big chip on his shoulder but eventually mellows out a bit. I actually like him being a bit of a butthole, but he's interesting because he has a completely different personality than Bruce does. He's a livelier kind of superhero."

"He's a kid," adds Dini. "He's 17, 18 years old; he has to go to school; he's got a family life. That all has to be dealt with. It's really more how he juggles the world and his role as a superhero rather than just somebody who goes out and fights crime every night."

And Terry's interaction with Bruce is the key to the series' success.

"It was really important for us to establish the relationship between Bruce Wayne and Terry McGinnis as the primary drive for the series," says Dini. "Their relationship is antagonistic at first, but they develop a kind of grudging admiration and a bond as the series goes along. We felt if the stories weren't being driven in a large part by that, then it would really be a pale redo of the old series."

Helping to take a bite out of Gotham's crime is none other than Commissioner Gordon. No, it's not the same white-haired, hard-nosed Jim Gordon who worked closely with the Dark Knight and even had his own personal Bat-pager. This commish is his daughter, former Batgirl Barbara Gordon. Choosing a career over crimefighting, she and Bruce apparently haven't spoken in years, for reasons which will be touched upon in future episodes.

"Barbara Gordon hung up the cape a long time ago as Batgirl, years and years before Bruce Wayne finally did," says Burnett. "She decided that in this new Gotham, the best way to work is within the system as a civilian. She has completely soured on caped crusaders and dark knights." Just then, Burnett's phone starts ringing for what must be the 10th time in the last hour. He sighs and answers it. Dini, straight-faced, says, "It's the Bat-phone."

BAT TO THE FUTURE

Who's who in the cast of "Batman Beyond"

TERRY McGINNIS/BATMAN

A rebellious 17-year-old, Terry is a completely different Batman than Bruce. Not only is he smaller and more wiry, but he's got a family and school life to juggle with his crimefighting.

BRUCE WAYNE

The mentor to the new Batman, Bruce is now approximately in his late 70s/early 80s. Don't count him out because of his age, though. Not only can he teach Terry how to be Batman, but Bruce has still got some fight in him yet.

DEREK POWERS/BLIGHT

The ultimate corporate predator, Powers' battles are fought inside boardrooms and not Gotham's back alleys. When he's transformed into the radiation-emitting entity known as Blight, his outward appearance finally matches his true inner self.

THE JOKERZ

Every bit as theatrical and fanatical as the legendary criminal they idolize, the clownishly dressed members of this violent street gang terrorize future Gotham. Cross their paths and you won't be laughing for long.

COMMISSIONER GORDON

Barbara Gordon gave up dressing like a bat years before Bruce Wayne did, deciding to mete out justice by assuming her father's role as police commissioner. She and Bruce haven't talked in years.

ROYAL FLUSH GANG

A family organization, this group of five thieves has existed for generations. When a young man apprentices as the group's Jack, he takes over once the old King retires.

ACE

A giant, jet-black Great Dane who is Bruce's faithful companion and protector. "If you crossed Scooby-Doo with a black panther, you'd get Ace," says producer Paul Dini. ■ PS

THE NEW VILLAINS

While today's Dark Knight generally took a back seat to scene stealers like the Joker and Mad Hatter, tomorrow's Batman enjoys center stage—at least for the moment. "'Batman Beyond' is a little more different in that it focuses more on Terry McGinnis and less on the villains themselves," says Dini. "For one thing, we're still feeling our way with some of the villains, so they haven't quite become the players that the old rogues gallery has."

In other words, don't expect aged versions of the Penguin, Riddler or Catwoman to be spreading their filth through Gotham. There are, however, some familiar-looking foes, such as the playing-card-themed Royal Flush Gang (from the *Batman* comics) and some white-faced, green-haired maniacs. The Joker may've been missing in action for years, but his spirit lives on through a punkish street gang called—what else?—the Jokerz.

"They're not related to him, they're not his kids or grandkids," says Dini. "The Jokerz looked back at 40, 50 years before when this mad killer clown named the Joker terrorized Gotham City, and from the distance of 40 years that looks pretty damn slick to them. So they're taking on that sort of in-your-face attitude by adopting clownish costumes and behavior, but with very threatening behavior."

The Jokerz may visually symbolize the Bat-villains of old, but businessman Derek Powers ushers in the Dark Knight's newest rogues gallery. A corporate sleazeball who wormed his way into Wayne Industries (now know as Wayne Powers Industries), he uses his power to gain...well, more power. "Derek Powers is an interesting character because he personifies the new criminal elite in Gotham," says Dini. "He's really a gangster but he operates in the boardroom as opposed to the backroom of a pool hall. He's a corporate shark in every sense of the word."

BOARD SILLY Timm oversees all storyboards (top), which map out all of an episode's actions and average 300 pages per episode.

The shark gets even more dangerous, though, when the new Batman enters the picture. Discovering that Powers was responsible for his dad's death, Terry interrupts Powers' latest project involving a highly potent nerve gas. In the ensuing scuffle, a canister is shattered, consuming Powers with the fatal gas. Thanks to his fast-acting lackeys, Powers is rushed to medical aid and treated with extreme radiation, the only thing that can possibly save him. It does, but for a price. His body's now a glowing skeleton of radiation—his mere touch is enough to burn. Calling himself "Blight," Powers dons a sort of flesh-like exoskeleton to hide his hideous nature.

"He's symbolic of the dark side of the corporate world," says Burnett. "He promotes an image of flesh and blood, but inside he's toxic. So watch out when his skin comes off, because in his case it literally does."

THE NEW LOOK

Creating an all-new series provides more difficulties than just new characters; the entire animated world itself needs to be shaped. And tomorrow's Gotham is a far cry from Bruce Wayne's old stomping grounds.

"It's a little more constricting world for us in that it takes place in the future, so we have to let go of things like bank robberies, because this is a world without cash now," says Burnett. "We have to think about how we can up the technology, yet make it really recognizable, because even though this takes place in the future, this is a recognizable future, a lived-in future. It's one that we want our audience to be able to get into very easily. It's not 'The Jetsons'; it's not Big Brother time—it's more complicated than that."

A futuristic Gotham also means completely new artwork. When it comes to background characters and scenery, the team can no longer rely on stock footage from the "Batman" or "Superman" animated series. The people, their clothing, the buildings, the cars—everything must come across as futuristic. So for the design team, it's basically start-from-ground-zero.

As for storyboarding—the process of mapping out an episode's actions, similar to a blueprint for a building—the new series plays things a little looser than average. Instead of the typical rigid structure of writers specifically scripting entire scenes and storyboarders following directions to the letter, Timm says everyone has room to contribute. "If [the writers] just describe a fistfight between Batman and a guy, I rely on my directors and storyboard guys to put a twist on it so it's not just a fistfight."

A director works closely with three storyboard artists to pencil the entire script out on paper. They've got just four weeks to finalize the look of everything from scene locations to new character designs. On average, 300 pages of storyboards are created for a single episode.

THE NEW SOUND

Putting together an entire animated episode isn't a completely linear process. Sure, things start with story ideas, then comes a script, and finally, storyboards. But there's also a lot of overlapping. While boarding is underway, the actors are busy recording their dialogue so their vocal nuances can be incorporated into their characters. If guest voices are needed, it's the job of the show's voice director and casting director to find the perfect voice for the character.

"Sometimes Bruce and I will be talking casually about upcoming episodes, and we'll rattle off a list of people we've seen in movies or television and say we would like to find something for them," says Dini. "It always surprises us who we can get for the show." The latest example is the voice of the King of the Royal Flush Gang, played by George Lazenby (who played James Bond in 1969's "On Her Majesty's Secret Service.") Other notable voices include Will Friedle ("Boy Meets World") as Terry, Teri Garr ("Mr. Mom") as his mother Mary, and Seth Green ("Buffy the Vampire Slayer") as Terry's high school rival Nelson Nash.

Returning again to supervise music for "Batman Beyond" is composer Shirley Walker. But whereas the original animated "Batman" show employed an orchestral music score, the sound of "Batman Beyond" is hard rock. "That's the real challenge so far on this show," notes Timm. "When we spot an episode of 'Superman' or 'Batman,' the music is orchestral; this scene here needs heroic music, or spooky music. But because this new show is rock-music-based—and if rock

CUTTING EDGE

Over the course of the "Batman" and "Superman" animated series' runs, plenty of scenes and episodes were axed for one reason or another. Wizard prodded producers Paul Dini, Bruce Timm and Alan Burnett to get the scoop on just what landed on the cutting room floor. Here's what they squealed:

DREAMS OF SUICIDE

When Batman realizes he's asleep, he must leap off of a tower to effectively end his dream existence in the episode "Perchance to Dream." When it was first storyboarded, this sequence was a lot darker—it made it look like Batman was really killing himself for good. It had to be toned down.

ENEMY ACE

Originally, there was a plan to show Ra's al Ghul in three time periods – fighting Jonah Hex in the old west, Enemy Ace in World War I and Batman in the present. The creators couldn't find room for Enemy Ace, and instead just went with Hex in "Showdown."

INTERVIEW WITH A BATMAN

At the conclusion of the first episode of a proposed two-parter, Batman would return home after fighting the female vampire Nocturna. Come morning, when the sunlight fell on Bruce's legs, they'd start to smoke! Both Fox and WB said no way vampires could be on Saturday mornings, let alone could their main character become one.

NO JUSTICE, NO LEAGUE

An episode set on the Justice League satellite has been tossed around. An early idea was to begin the episode with Superman and Captain Marvel arm wrestling to pass the time, but Burnett's eventual Aquaman episode developed first.

WATERWORLD

The original ending to Burnett's Aquaman episode got shelved. "The climax was Luthor setting off a bomb on the ocean floor which opens a five-mile crack," explains Timm. "All the water in the ocean pours in, and coastlines recede by about ten miles. As a backlash, this big tidal wave would come in and wipe out the city—and our budget for the year." ■ PS

isn't done right, it sounds really bad—it has to sound as authentic as possible." Timm even loaned the composer some of his CDs (like Nine Inch Nails, Offspring and White Zombie) to give Walker an idea of the type of music heard in this Batman's world.

GETTING ANIMATED

When the storyboards are finally complete, each producer makes his final comments. The network also steps in at this point to ensure that the episode conforms to broadcast standards—basically, no story material or character designs can be too racy or violent (see sidebar). But "too racy" is exactly what the network thought when it first saw Inque.

"She is a female shapeshifter, very slinky and kind of seductive looking," Dini explains. "A lot of times, she can look like a pool of ink on the floor or a shadow. Part of the problem is the network doesn't know if she's wearing clothes or not. When she appears in her form, she has a female shape with swirls around her, but it's not the traditional superhero costume where you can see tights and boots." The network eventually approved the character's look, but the same problem re-occurred with the semi-solid outline of another female villain named Freon, who can turn into living gas and become indistinct. This time, the producers offered a solution: add a belt line to show she's wearing clothes.

After approvals, everything created gets shipped to the animation house of KOKO/Dong Yang in Korea, where they get a head start on drawing the actual animation cels. However, the "Batman Beyond" team still needs to furnish the background paintings along with a color chart, which is usually shipped about three weeks later.

So what happens in Korea? First, the animators draw a rough form of what the episode will look like from the storyboards. Once the rough black-and-white animation has been approved, it's then cleaned up, fully animated and inked. As soon as the color chart arrives, they begin painting the individual cels and backgrounds. Except for the main title sequence, all of the animation in "Batman Beyond" is done overseas. An average episode takes roughly four months to animate, while an elaborate one could take as much as half a year.

Once complete, the episode is shipped back to America, where the editor and director begin editing the piece. Afterwards, the episode gets stamped with a time code, which ensures that all of the episode's sounds and voices will be exactly where they're supposed to be. Each episode, broken into three acts (those pesky commercials, you know), must be 22 minutes in length. When it's complete, once again the network steps in and gives its stamp of approval. The episode's now ready for broadcast.

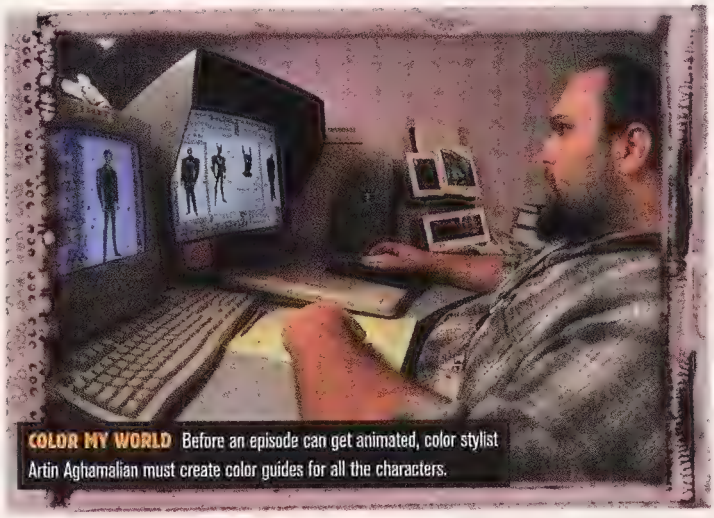
CLOSING CREDITS

It takes almost an entire year to create one single "Batman Beyond" episode. At that rate, how can these guys possibly crank out 13 or 26 episodes in just one season? Simple. They work on more than one episode at a time. Over the course of one day, the producers may commission a new script, approve character designs for one episode, look at storyboards for another, and then watch an episode that's just been edited.

Now that the new series has premiered, the producers can sit back (for a second at least) and admire their work. What they've found is a little surprising.

"We're surprised ourselves with the reaction we got," says Dini. "When you work on it day-to-day, you get tunnel vision and you just sort of hope for the best. I think we took a lot of people by surprise in a good way. I'm thrilled with the reaction we've gotten." (W)

Canadian-based freelancer Patrick Sauriol never met a piece of bacon he didn't like. New Jersey-based D.B. Nicholls, on the other hand, once lost an eye in the "Bacon and Eggs Skirmish" of '72.



COLOR MY WORLD Before an episode can get animated, color stylist Artin Aghamalian must create color guides for all the characters.

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THE WIZARD Q&A

BY GREG ORLANDO • PHOTOS BY PAUL SCHIRALDI

Tom DeFalco clutches madly at thin air. His hands tighten around an imaginary throat; his lips pull back in a snarl. His arms flail wildly.

The former Marvel Comics editor-in-chief is remembering—and gleefully re-enacting—the time a Marvel artist was struggling to draw hero Indiana Jones choking someone. DeFalco, ever the hands-on boss, took his then-assistant Eliot Brown and began to throttle him so the artist would have some perspective.

DeFalco has attacked his comic book career in much the same manner—with a tangible enthusiasm and a dogged, get-dirty-or-get-out philosophy. In his nearly 30-year career, DeFalco's done everything from opening fan letters for Archie Comics' *Betty and Veronica* to serving as editor-in-chief at Marvel, America's then most powerful comic company.

Along the way, DeFalco made a name for himself as a prolific writer. With lengthy writing stints on *Amazing Spider-Man* and *Fantastic Four*, he's shown comics fans he's not afraid of controversy: On *Amazing*, DeFalco stirred fan debate by steering the wall-crawler through his first-ever costume change in 1984. When it came time to kill (albeit temporarily) the Fantastic Four's leader Mr. Fantastic in 1993's *Fantastic Four* #381, DeFalco pulled the trigger. In 1988, DeFalco rose to the post of Marvel's editor-in-chief, which he held for seven years, piloting the company through the comic industry's most fruitful years before being unceremoniously canned in 1995.

But he stayed at Marvel and still remains, where he now sits on a battered blue sofa in an unused corner of its famed Bullpen (located on the 10th floor of Marvel's New York City headquarters). He's there to field questions about his comic book career and his newest project—Marvel's MC2 line (short for "Marvel Comics 2"). A surprise hit, the three-book line is set in an alternate-reality future where Spider-Man's daughter lived to fight crime in *Spider-Girl*,

TOM defalco

He changed Spider-Man's costume.
He killed off Mr. Fantastic.
Now self-proclaimed
"bozo-in-chief"
TOM DeFALCO
takes on the future
world of Marvel
with its MC2 line.

VITAL STATS

OCCUPATION: Freelance writer/editor for Marvel's MC2 line

BORN: Queens, N.Y. on June 26, 1950

BASE OF OPERATIONS: "I'm three degrees off the Negative Zone. It makes commuting with this plane of reality somewhat problematic."

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: In his 30-year career, DeFalco's had lengthy writing stints on *Amazing Spider-Man*, *Fantastic Four* and *Thor;* he spearheaded Spidey's first-ever costume change, killed Mr. Fantastic and replaced the God of Thunder with an ordinary mortal. He rose to prominence as Marvel's editor-in-chief in 1988, served until 1995, and has found new life as the creator of Marvel's popular future line called MC2.

WEIRDEST THING HE'S EVER SEEN: "When [comic artist] Bob Layton fell asleep in my refrigerator. We were basically doing a suicide line on *Team America* #1 [in 1982] and were working all night at my apartment. He'd sat down on the floor to reach for a soda and was so tired he just fell asleep, partially in the refrigerator and partially on the floor."

a new generation of Avengers fights on in *A-Next* and the son of the Juggernaut learns how to be a hero in *J2*. As does its creator, MC2 flies in the face of comics tradition by presenting a future where optimism rules and by establishing a heroine as the three-book line's flagship character. DeFalco, who writes and edits the MC2 books, lovingly refers to himself as the line's "bozo-in-chief."

Throughout the interview, DeFalco, a genuinely good-natured, gray-haired, red-faced man with a salt-and-pepper beard and infectious smile, spits out the easy answers in a rapid-fire *Noo Yawk* accent heavy enough to crush a Buick. The tough ones he tackles with thoughtful pauses.

He doesn't blink, let alone pause, when asked about MC2's sole weakness. "Tom DeFalco," he jokes, tugging at the world's ugliest tie—a multi-colored monstrosity. "Get rid of him. Get a better writer. Get a better editor. I'm talking skill-wise.

"Obviously, looks-wise, you can't get any better."

WIZARD: What's your philosophy for MC2?

DeFALCO: Let's have a good time. The industry is going through a shaky period right now, so the guys and I got together and said, these could be the last days of comics so let's go out singing and dancing and having a blast. The weirdest thing about MC2 is, it shouldn't be working. It is an alternate universe. The main book is about a female lead. It's happy. Everything that's working in comics today, [MC2 is] not. I don't know why it's working. I would love to say that there's a master plan here, but we're just having a good time.

So how did MC2 get started?

[Artist] Ron Frenz and I were looking for an excuse to work together again. We did what we thought was a one-shot Spider-Girl story [*What If...?* #105]. Because the Spider-Girl story was set in the future, and we had to look at that world, we kind of approached it as if it was the pilot episode for a new series. We had to figure out if we were gonna do futuristic cars and we said, no. We realized it's 1998. Think about what the world was like in 1983. Does it really look that different? And the answer is, absolutely not. Watch a movie done in 1983. Watch one in 1998. The world pretty much looks the same. So we said, we'll drop all of the futuristic stuff.

And from there?

Around here, people knew it was a new book before we did. We were talking about maybe doing *What If...?* regularly and then *What If...?* #105 went on sale Wednesday morning and on Wednesday afternoon, it sold out. The office got calls for it and people started writing letters and that sort of stuff. [Marvel Editor-in-Chief] Bob Harras kept getting asked when the *Spider-Girl* comic is coming out. The next time I showed up in the office, he said, "Tom, walk with me," and proposed that we do *Spider-Girl*. I remember looking at him and going, "Based on a *What If...?* What? Are you kidding?" [*laughs*] Once we decided to do one book in this alternate universe, we thought we should do a couple.

Do you consider MC2 to be a children's line?

I consider it to be a line for 15-year-olds of all ages. Those who are younger than 15 and wish they were 15, and those who are older than 15 and wish they were 15.

Which explains why the books have such a light tone.

I was talking to Ron [Frenz] and I asked, "What do we really like in comics?" and we said, you know, there are no happy futures. Most of comics at that time were so depressing, and I don't want to pay money to get depressed. My mortgage bill comes and I'm depressed. I turn on the news and I'm depressed. What? Do I have to pay $1.99 to get depressed? I want to buy comic books to get happy.

You probably made fans ecstatic when you recently gave them the opportunity to decide which new characters will get their own new MC2 comics. Why a reader poll?

The company first spoke to me and said, maybe we should have a fourth book so that one comes out each week, which one would you like to do? I started talking to the [MC2 artists] and then it struck me, we were getting such response in terms of letters—both positive and negative—and it just struck me that we wouldn't have had a line if the readers hadn't voiced their opinions in the first place. So, the next time I was talking to the powers-that-be at Marvel, I said, "How about we let the readers decide?"

All the MC2 books emphasize youth as a theme. How do you pull it off?

I'm the goofball uncle. I have a lot of nephews and nieces and they look at me as the goofball uncle, the guy who is always giving them the stuff that their parents are trying to keep away from them. As a result of this, a lot of times when my nephews or nieces were arguing with their parents they'd come and hang out with me. So, a lot of times I'm their confidant—and the themes that we deal with in MC2, I think are the themes of youth.

What's going to happen in MC2 in the coming months?

We have a number of occurrences that are happening in the universe, obviously with Mayday [Spider-Girl] and her father [Spider-Man]. They haven't come to terms. He's gonna realize that just because he doesn't

want her to have the powers, they're not going to go away; he raised her to be a very responsible person so that ain't going away and he wouldn't want it to go away. So eventually they have to come to terms. With each issue their relationship matures.

With the Avengers, the *A-Next* group, they're gonna have a big event because they're gonna discover that there was a pivotal event with the original Avengers that actually caused the demise of the original Avengers, which occurred about a year and a half before the team actually broke up, and they're going to investigate it and go through quite a horrific growth experience. After that, we're not sure what's going to happen with the team.

And in J2?

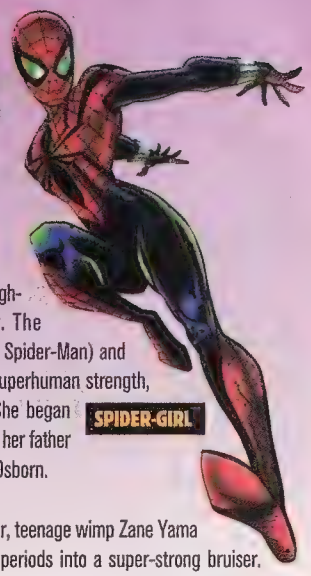
Just a lot of silliness.

We usually have a lead story that fits into some traditional comic book mode and then after that we go nuts. In issue #8, there's a two-page feature with [occasional *J2* guest-star] Wild Thing and her

LIKE FATHER LIKE SON
J2 is the teenage son of the Juggernaut in MC2's future world.

MC2101

Fast-forward 15 years into the Marvel Universe's future–welcome to MC2! Here's a rundown of the line's key players...

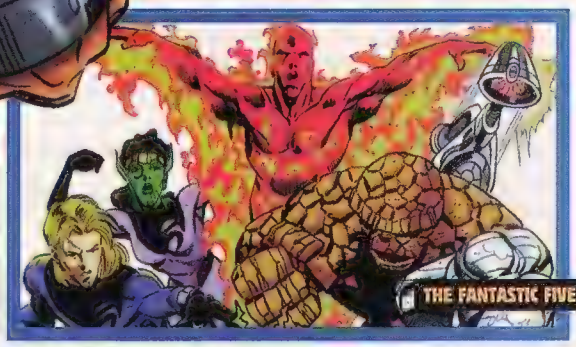


SPIDER-GIRL

SPIDER-GIRL Genetics smiled on high-school student May "Mayday" Parker. The daughter of Peter Parker (the now-retired Spider-Man) and his wife Mary Jane, May was born with superhuman strength, agility and the ability to cling to walls. She began her crimefighting career as Spider-Girl after her father was threatened by the villainous Normie Osborn.

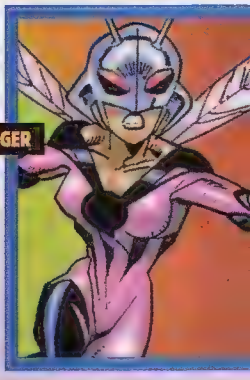
J2 Naked as a jaybird and cowering in fear, teenage wimp Zane Yama discovered he could transform for brief periods into a super-strong bruiser. He took the superhero name J2 to honor his missing father, Cain Marko, the original Juggernaut, and recently joined the newly reformed Avengers.

THE FANTASTIC FIVE Time has not been kind to some in this veteran superhero team. The Invisible Woman is dead (though it hasn't been revealed how), the brain of Mr. Fantastic now resides in a floating robot body, and the Thing's left arm has been replaced by a metallic prosthesis. The rest of the FF is rounded out by the Human Torch, Franklin Richards and the Torch's shape-changing Skrull wife, Lyja.



THE FANTASTIC FIVE

THE AVENGERS The world has been without a team of Avengers for 10 years and in the MC2 future, a new team keeps the legend going. The active roster is comprised of Mainframe, a mysterious armored hero with technological expertise; Stinger, daughter of former Ant-Man Scott Lang with whom she shares similar shrinking powers and bio-electric "sting" blasts; Thunderstrike, son of deceased Thunderstrike, who also has storm-controlling powers minus the mystical hammer; and J2. The reserve roster includes American Dream, probably the daughter of Sharon Carter and Captain America; Crimson Curse, who has nature-controlling powers; Bluestreak, a super-speedster, who looks Quicksilver-esque; and Freebooter, a marksman and fighter whose costume is an ode to Hawkeye and Swordsman. ■ GO



STINGER

THUNDERSTRIKE

MAINFRAME

mother [Elektra] called "Girls' Night Out." It basically compares them to Mary Jane and Mayday Parker.

After a good run as a Marvel writer and editor, you were promoted to editor-in-chief. Do you think there was anything special that set you apart from the other candidates?

I was probably better-looking than all the other guys. I can't figure out anything else. I was also probably much more the corporate type because I had at one point in my life owned a suit. I think I used it to make my first Holy Communion and I don't know if any of the other guys had ever owned suits.

And you do have the tie...

That's right. I wore ties to the office and there's a special reason why. When I was a freelancer, if the man yelling at me wore a tie it always seemed to have greater weight to it, as opposed to a guy wearing a sweatshirt. So when they asked me to come on staff I said, well, maybe I should wear a tie so this way if I ever yell at anybody they'd take me seriously.

Can you describe what your tenure was like as editor-in-chief?

It was a combat zone. My work there used to start around 6 o'clock in the morning and end around 11 o'clock at night, and those were the good days. We were riding on top of the rail because we would sit in the morning and somebody would come out with the idea for doing a book and we'd say, hey, yeah, this sounds cool, and by that afternoon we were already working on it.

We were a fast and loose company. If a good idea popped up [*snaps fingers*], we jumped on it. Marvel Comics was a supreme juggernaut. It was invincible. It could never be stopped, until the powers-that-be started shooting themselves in the foot with an Uzi.

You were let go as editor-in-chief when Marvel began its policy of "Marvelution," with the establishment of a "Spider-Man line," an "X-Men line" and so on inside Marvel's editorial department, each with its own editor-in-chief...

I was basically fired and replaced. Talk about a fantasy come true, they needed five people to replace me.

What exactly happened at that time?

REBORN When the original Avengers disband in the future, a new generation of heroes pick up the slack.

I still can't explain it to this day. I don't know what they [Marvel management] were thinking. They had decided that instead of one editor-in-chief they wanted five. I think that it helped place divisions inside Marvel that were not necessary. At the time, they said to me, hey, we have a nice job for you, and it was a fancy job with a fancy title and all of that, but I said thanks very much, but I'm out of here.

Yet after you were fired, you stayed at Marvel. Why stay with a company that fired you?

At the time I was dismissed, I felt that I would outlast the people who dismissed me because I knew that I was in this industry, for the long haul and I felt they were in it for the short haul. I thought that if I hung around long enough, they would go and everything would get back to normal. I was right that they made their money and took off. I was wrong because things did not go back to normal.

I stay because I still have a great affection for a lot of the people at Marvel. I have a great affection for a lot of the characters at Marvel. I still love this medium and this industry has been very good to me. I still think that I can contribute and help out, and maybe fix some of the things that are wrong. At least at Marvel I occasionally get the opportunity to do that. It's kind of my way of giving something back.

What's your take on the current state of Marvel?

To be completely candid, there is no way I can answer that question in any civil way. If I come out in a negative way, that sounds like sour grapes, and if I come on in a very supportive way, everybody's going to know that I'm full of it.

Do you have any regrets about your career?

I wish I was a better writer. I'm still worrying and in another 20 years I'll still be worrying. I wish I had the time to write all of the things that I wanted to.

If you were forced to write your own epitaph, what would it be?

"Here lies Tom DeFalco who tried to entertain some people. Sometimes he succeeded. Thanks for being there."

Here lies Wizard *Copy Editor Greg Orlando. He doubled negatives, misplaced modifiers and had no use for possessives.*

the DeFALCO REIGN

Tom DeFalco's been a part of a lot of controversy in his years as a comics pro. Here's his take on a few of the biggies.

ON CHANGING SPIDER-MAN'S COSTUME: "When we announced it, everybody hated the idea. Because of this, my instructions were, bring the costume in for one issue and get rid of it. I remember arguing, 'Wait a minute! They haven't seen it yet. Let's show them that this is something new and unique and add something to the Spider-Man legend, instead of it just being a blight.' When the costume finally came out and people saw how we were dealing with it, they decided they loved it."

ON KILLING MR. FANTASTIC: "It was never my intention to bring Reed Richards back. I knew how he could come back, and I figured that as soon as I got off the book the first story would be bringing him back. So I had the 'escape' for somebody, but I never wanted to bring him back. I did it under orders. It was either that or get fired. So I said, okay. I might as well do it myself then."

ON THE X-MEN EXPLOSION: "I never much thought about it. *X-Men* was just one piece of the pie and I never had a chance to sit back and say, 'Hey! This is great, we're number one!' *X-Men* was a prime candidate [for expansion] at the time. These books were selling great and people wanted more."

ON WORKING WITH CONTROVERSIAL EDITOR JIM SHOOTER: [*EDITOR'S NOTE: DeFalco worked under former Marvel Editor-in-Chief Jim Shooter as executive editor during the mid-'80s*] "Shooter and I were a really good team. He was a terrific idea man and a very creative individual, and I'm a very practical person. He would envision these great plans, and I would figure out how to make them work. I feel Shooter's been unfairly blamed for a lot of things, and hasn't been given the credit he deserves on other things." ■ **The *Wizard* Staff**

AVENGERS #16
WARBIRD AND PHOTON ARE BACK!
Unfortunately, So Are The Wrecking Crew!
MUTANT X #8 &
MUTANT X 1999
A TWO-PART WAR FOR THEIR WORLD!
Concludes In The Annual!
MARVEL
MAR. 1999
HOT PICKS
MASTERWORK
HERE COMES...
DAREDEVIL
THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR!
SPIDER-MAN
AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #5 &
PETER PARKER: SPIDER-MAN #5
THE DEBUT OF THE ALL-NEW SPIDER-WOMAN!
A Lead-In To SPIDER-WOMAN #1!
DAREDEVIL #7 &
MARVEL MASTERWORKS:
DAREDEVIL VOL. 1
A VILLAIN REVEALED! A CLASSIC COLLECTION!
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TUG of W

COUNTDOWN TO WIZARD 2000

Wizard answers the age-old question: Who's better: Marvel or DC?

By the *Wizard* Staff • Illustrations by Phil Jimenez

Who's cooler: Superman or Spider-Man? Who's better: Kurt Busiek or Grant Morrison? Who's hipper: the new JLA or the new Avengers?

Yep, everyone's got their favorites. Everyone's had the arguments. And many of those arguments boil down to one simple question: Which is the better company: Marvel or DC?

It's Marvel Zombies pitted against Johnny DCs in the ultimate battle of comic book publishers...and we ain't talking about that *Marvel vs. DC* mini-series. (Though, just between us, being called a "zombie" beats being called a "johnny" any day.)

Yeah, there've been the Images, the Dark Horses and the Onis over the years, but Marvel and DC still dominate the market, proving its characters are what most of us have grown up on and still love reading.

Marvel's traditionally been the king of the hill, but recently DC has made a big push to become #1 in market share. But which publisher is #1 in overall quality? Which one is better equipped for the 21st-century comic book fan? Which one'll keep us from sleeping late on Saturday mornings? *Wizard* pits the two comic juggernauts in a battle of the publishing stars, from characters to creators to cartoon series and more.

Who will come off the battlefield victorious? It's not as clear cut as you'd think. See for yourself.

CHARACTERS

DC created the superhero, but Marvel perfected it.

By taking DC's heroic blueprint, Marvel could only improve on it by doing one thing: making its heroes more human.

While DC's superheroic icons appear virtually flawless (Superman is a god, Batman uses his vast wealth as the world's greatest detective, Wonder Woman is an Amazon), Marvel's heroes have been purposely crafted to be *imperfect*, generating instant appeal to readers who could relate to characters that face daily challenges and personal problems similar to their own. And Marvel's characters run the gamut on personal obstacles: the nerdy Spider-Man never gets a happy ending; the Thing, trapped inside the body of a hideous monster, only wants to be accepted by the world; or the Hulk, a normal guy, turns into a violent beast when enraged.

Because of Marvel's "human touch," we usually find ourselves referring to most Marvel heroes by their real names before their costumed monikers. Peter Parker is Spider-Man. Tony Stark is Iron Man. Bruce Banner is the Hulk. DC heroes, on the other hand, get tagged the other way around: Batman is Bruce Wayne, Superman is Clark Kent, Aquaman is Arthur Curry (or Orin, or whatever the heck he's calling himself lately).

The clincher belongs to the villains—and each company's villains share many of the same traits as its heroes. Marvel founder Stan Lee once summed up Marvel's villains as characters that, except for one human flaw or tragedy, could have been heroes. DC's villains, with few exceptions (Luthor and the Joker, to be specific), tend to be far from relatable...and full of bluster.

Darkseid is a cosmic dictator usually presented as all-powerfully evil, but he rarely does anything worthy of his rep; Mr. Mxyzptlk, the Riddler and the Toyman are more nuisances than threats—not at all characters you're made to care for. On the plus side, DC has taken strides to improve lamer members of its rogues gallery in 1996's "Underworld Unleashed" and recent issues of *JLA*, but it still has a long way to go.

DC has also tried to emphasize more humanity in its characters by emulating Marvel's characterization style: Green Lantern, Flash, Nightwing and Robin each struggle with relationship woes and occasionally botch stopping a supervillain. But when your Big Three icon-heroes show no chinks in their armor, it's tough to overcome the perception that your characters are tough to relate to.

The Winner: Marvel

WRITERS

Quality, consistency and diversity. Three key components that embody the best writing stable in the industry. And that stable belongs to DC Comics.

DC flaunts a well-rounded team of diverse writers of consistent quality, including players like Garth Ennis, Grant Morrison, Mark Waid, Warren Ellis and Paul Dini. Sure, no one's arguing that there aren't any clunkers in the overall mix, but for the most part, DC's writing core is as strong as Superman.

Even Marvel recognizes DC's muscle when it comes to storytelling talent. Why else would Marvel have pursued Waid to overhaul *Captain America*, Dan Jurgens to retool *Thor* or Steve Seagle to write *Uncanny X-Men*? When it comes to writers, no one needs to look any further than DC.

And fans will follow because of DC's consistency and quality. With a DC writer, readers know what kind of comic they're likely gonna get. DC's *JLA* book, almost 30 issues old, is mostly the vision of one man: writer Grant Morrison. Marvel's X-Men, on the other hand, is a revolving door of writers who have difficulty conforming to a heavy-handed editorial policy. With its rebooted core books like *Thor* and *Avengers*, Marvel's on the right track of letting its writers take the forefront.

But that philosophy has always ruled at DC. It simply lets its top writers do what they do best: write.

The Winner: DC

ARTISTS

Name your favorite artists. Odds are they're a Marvel artist or a by-product of Marvel. Whether it's Joe Madureira, Alex Ross or an up-and-comer like Leinil Yu, each one developed into a bankable commodity at Marvel.

Marvel holds a well of artistic talent. Just look at the names Marvel employs: George Pérez, Joe Quesada, Mark Texeira, Joe Jusko,

Andy and Adam Kubert, Jae Lee. At least half of them land on *Wizard*'s Top 10 hot artists list each month.

Much like DC cultivates its writers to be the best in the biz, Marvel does virtually the same with its artists. Guys like Yu, Alan Davis, José Ladronn, Carlos Pacheco, Steve Skroce, and Salvador Larroca all came from Marvel's "farm system" through its U.S. books or its international publishing divisions. And even if they didn't get their start at Marvel, superstars like Todd McFarlane, Jim Lee, Frank Miller and John Byrne were each given opportunities to strut their stuff at the House of Ideas. Case in point: Regardless of any politics, when the industry's hottest artists formed Image Comics in 1992, none of them came from DC.

But DC has recently made great strides to improve its art stable. With its recent acquisition of WildStorm, DC's artistic arsenal improves dramatically. But don't get back to us until the likes of Jim Lee, Joe Madureira, J. Scott Campbell and Travis Charest can crank out books with any sort of regularity.

The Winner: Marvel

UNIVERSES

The Marvel Universe keeps it real. The DC Universe gives us real problems.

With a healthy suspension of disbelief, Marvel characters exist in real U.S. cities and command a fairly smooth continuity. DC characters, unfortunately, exist in a universe that has become so cluttered with retroactive restarts and confusing "parallel Earths" that we don't even know where to begin to start. And that's the problem fans will ultimately face. But we'll give it a try: DC restarted its continuity with 1985's mini-series called *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, which was intended to clear up DC's muddled 50-year-old continuity. While successful on some levels, *Crisis* created many other perplexing issues which DC tried to clear up with 1994's *Zero Hour* mini-series. That accomplished exactly zero, and now with the recent *Kingdom* mini-series, everything is practically back to the pre-*Crisis* mess. You getting all this?

To further cause potential confusion, DC used *Crisis* as an opportunity to totally reboot major characters like Superman and Wonder Woman. The new starts proved successful, but if a casual fan picks up a pre-1986 Superman or Wonder Woman comic, he'd be alarmed to learn that the issue's story never "happened" to the heroes in the current comics. DC had to go out of its way to explain continuity loopholes, turning off some fans.

Other awkward loopholes in DC's universe are its use of fake U.S. cities like Gotham City or Metropolis, whereas Marvel heroes hang around New York City or Los Angeles.

By going the extra mile to set its heroes in real cities, Marvel's universe has an implied reality—a reader can suspend disbelief of the fantastic by rooting stories in a real-world setting. It's harder to care about phony geography. Sure, you can do whatever you want to a fake town—build it, burn it, bury it—but when Galactus threatens Manhattan, it carries a lot more dramatic weight seeing familiar landmarks at stake. When DC's fictional Coast City gets obliterated in an issue of *Superman*, the impact is lessened 'cause it ain't a place anybody recognizes, visits or has relatives in.

The Winner: Marvel

DIVERSITY

Not much competition here.

DC's diversity knows no bounds, while Marvel's forays outside of superheroes have seldom succeeded.

COMIC COMBAT

Yeah, yeah, yeah...when you boil down all the serious stuff it looks like DC edges out Marvel as the best comic publisher in the world, but what happens when you rank the two of 'em by the *really* important stuff?

MARVEL	DC
Licenses characters to be on Spaghetti-O's	Licenses characters to be on Kraft Mac & Cheese **EDGE: DC**
Stands for "surprise, wonder and awe" **EDGE: MARVEL**	Stands for "Detective Comics"
Marvel is owned by Toy Biz and is emerging from bankruptcy	DC is owned by Time-Warner, which has 87 percent of all money ever printed **EDGE: DC**
One universe, one continuity **EDGE: MARVEL**	Endless parallel dimensions full of things like Beppo the Supermonkey and Bat-Mite
Omega Red **EDGE: MARVEL**	Superman Red
Price for a regular-size comic: $1.99 **EDGE: MARVEL**	Price for a regular-size comic: $1.99, $2.25, $2.50, $2.75 or $2.99, depending on whichever way the wind is blowing that day
Has unsold copies of *Fantastic Force* in office waiting room	Has life-size statue of Superman in a phone booth in office waiting room **EDGE: DC**
Characters appear in *Battlebooks*	Characters don't appear in *Battlebooks* **EDGE: DC**
"When Cap-tain A-meri-ca throws his might-y shieeeld..." **EDGE: MARVEL**	"...na na na na na na na na na na na NA...Bat-maaaaaan!!!"

And the outcome? 5-4, Marvel. Now hopefully, this'll be enough to prevent the thousands of PO'd Marvel Zombies from sending us letter bombs.

■ *The* **Wizard** *Staff*

From superhero buffs to cartoon fans to alternative aficionados, every fan can find something from DC. Besides its mainstream superhero publishing division, DC has a Cartoon Network line for younger readers, a Vertigo line for fans of offbeat material and a reprint line for fans of comics from the 1930s and 1940s.

Curiously, Marvel's attempts at similar expansion have failed. The creator-owned Epic Comics line, the Star Comics line for young'uns, the macabre and offbeat Strange Tales line…all would eventually fold, teaching Marvel to stick with what makes 'em successful: strictly superheroes.

The Winner: DC

RISK FACTOR

When you're #2, you'll do anything to be top dog. And that's why DC, traditionally the industry's #2 publisher, has taken a lot of risks to give Marvel, the longtime #1 publisher, a run for its money.

How? Over the past six years, DC has overhauled its superheroes by taking chances with them. Superman died, returned and underwent a costume and power alteration. An injured Batman was replaced; once he returned he had to pick up the pieces of an earthquake-ravaged Gotham City. A 40-something Green Lantern transformed into a raving villain and was replaced by a younger, inexperienced hero.

Sure, some of its new ideas bombed, while others scored big-time. Either way, DC wins points for trying.

Marvel's idea of "new and different" mostly means relaunching books, spinning off popular characters or going back to a formula that's been successful for them in the past. It's recent "Heroes Return" and Marvel Knights restarts proved a hit, but history has proven that #1 issues traditionally sell very well.

When Captain America and the Hulk are hits with fans, each is given a second ongoing series; favored supporting players like Gambit and Deadpool are awarded their own ongoings. And the "new" Avengers and X-Men rosters? Mostly a mix of characters we've all seen together before. (Heck, we'll still take the spinoffs and retro-rosters, but they're definitely not dicey propositions.)

But we've gotta give Marvel credit by taking a chance with its Marvel Knights line by hiring unproven editors Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti to turn around second- and third-tier heroes. And they managed to do it using talent normally plagued by inconsistency and unreliability in recent years, making Knights a bright spot in Marvel's lineup. To stay #1, though, Marvel must use Knights as a stepping-stone to be more of a leader, not imitate its past successes. That X-Men gravy train won't last forever.

The Winner: DC

MASS MEDIA

When your parent company is synonymous with mass media, it's hard to be beat. DC's Time-Warner connection allows it to simply do more with a bigger budget and better talent.

This means superior cartoons on TV, real comic book movies on the big screen, a myriad of toy lines, a chain of Warner Bros. Stores to sell all DC-related merchandise and the Six Flags theme park machine for complete family interaction with DC characters and concepts.

But don't misconstrue. "More" doesn't always mean "better," but in DC's case, it does. Take both companies' animation wings. While Marvel's cartoons mine its comic book beginnings, DC's cartoons actually *improve* upon its characters. The current Mr. Freeze and Harley Quinn started out in Batman's animated world, but their popularity has primed them for the comic books. Plus, DC's animated series are smartly written with complex characters and can be enjoyed by anybody, young or old. Marvel's cartoons, while fun for pure comic fans to watch, are fairly simplistic in nature.

Yet, for all DC's mass media might, Marvel has made tremendous strides with its own animation division, Marvel Mania theme restaurants, Marvel Island of Adventure theme park, Toy Biz action figure lines, and a bunch of popular Capcom video games. Not to mention building a film foundation with a fun flick like "Blade," which dulls a history of producing cheeseball, direct-to-video embarrassments and stalled ventures.

Give Marvel a few more years and a few more movie hits, and maybe this category becomes more of a battle.

The Winner: DC

KEANU REEVES LAURENCE FISHBURNE

THE

MATRIX

HAS

YOU.

ON APRIL 2nd BE AFRAID OF THE FUTURE

WARNER BROS. PRESENTS

IN ASSOCIATION WITH VILLAGE ROADSHOW PICTURES / GROUCHO II FILM PARTNERSHIP, A SILVER PICTURES PRODUCTION

KEANU REEVES LAURENCE FISHBURNE "THE MATRIX" CARRIE-ANNE MOSS HUGO WEAVING AND JOE PANTOLIANO

STORY BY DON DAVIS EDITED BY ZACH STAENBERG PRODUCTION DESIGNER OWEN PATERSON DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY BILL POPE CO-PRODUCER DAN CRACCHIOLO

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS BARRIE OSBORNE ANDREW MASON ANDY WACHOWSKI LARRY WACHOWSKI ERWIN STOFF AND BRUCE BERMAN PRODUCED BY JOEL SILVER WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY THE WACHOWSKI BROTHERS

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THE VICTOR

And the final tally is...DC wins, 4-3. Not what you expected, huh? While Marvel has ruled the comics world in recent decades with its fan-friendly characters (Spider-Man, Iron Man and the X-Men), DC has expanded the perception of the comic book character. In these times where comics are facing more competition than ever from the likes of video games, the Internet and cable TV, comics have to be as proactive as possible. They need to offer a wide array of themes and story lines that push the boundaries of what comics are more than ever before. DC, through major media events (death of Supes, etc.), diversity (Cartoon Network books, Vertigo, etc.) and mainstream media success (top-rated 'toons, big-budget films, Six Flags theme parks, Warner Bros. Stores, etc.), is really doing the job.

But don't count Marvel out just yet. Their characters still connect to us like no others. We'll give this round to DC. At least until the Spider-Man movie is made...and the X-Men film...and an Avengers cartoon...and the Marvel theme park opens...and so on...and so on.

The Wizard *Staff primarily grew up as Marvel Zombies, but just because DC came out on top this time, we AIN'T gonna call ourselves some sissy name like Johnny DC.*

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CASTING call

KEVIN SMITH casts his SUPERMAN MOVIE!

BY KEVIN SMITH

No. I did *not* see Nic Cage as Superman.

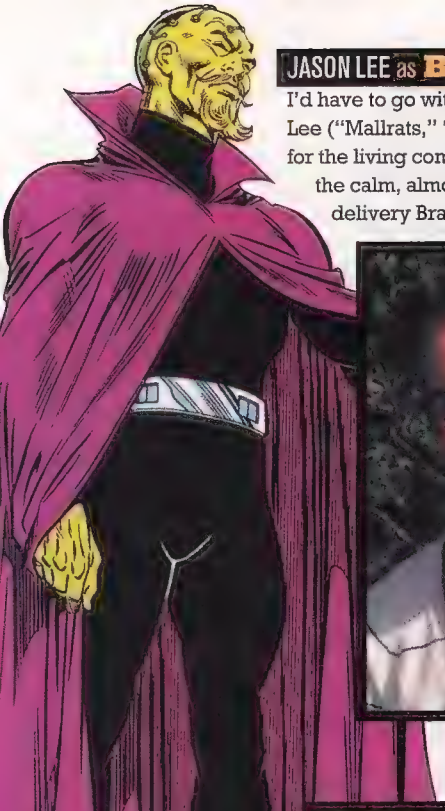
While writing a little picture for the Brothers Warner called "Superman Lives," I actually *did* throw Cage's name into the mix, but as Brainiac, not the Man of Steel. Producer Jon Peters, the guy in charge of this über-franchise (and the one who'd frequently ask me, "who's Kal-El?"), thought Cage would make the perfect Kryptonian, because he could play up the alien aspect. A decent thought, but this was the same Jon Peters who once confessed to me that his original choice was Sean Penn because the actor had the charisma of a "caged animal" and "violent killer"—qualities he thought were inherent in Superman.

But this "Casting Call" is about who *I* saw in the roles as I was writing the script. What follows is the list of actors I'd envisioned delivering the dialogue. I think they'd make the perfect choices for my version of "Superman Lives," which has since been tossed out by Tim Burton—who's now also off the project. (I calls it karma.)

Enjoy.

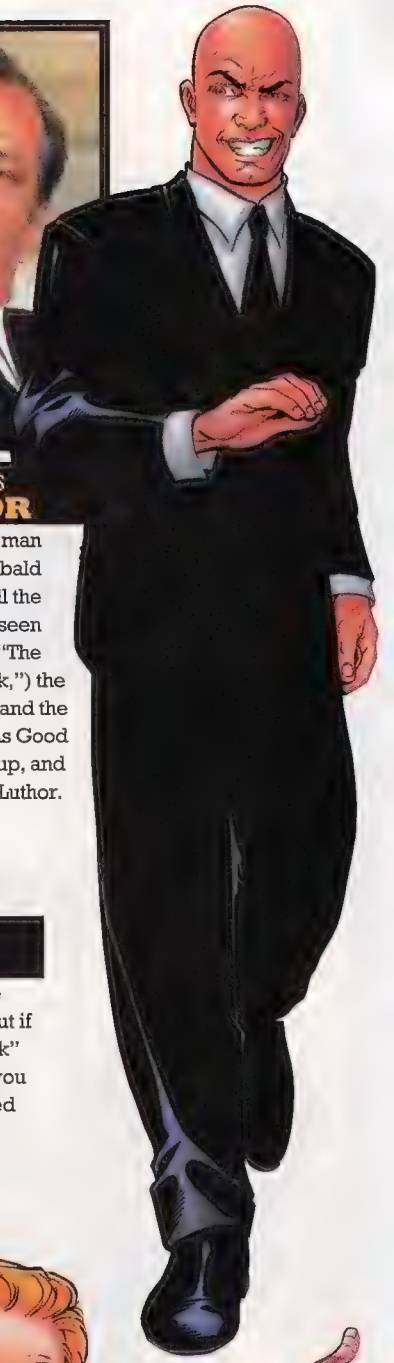
BEN AFFLECK as SUPERMAN/CLARK KENT

I've worked with this cat a few times, and the man can do it all: pathos, comedy, drama. He plays an angel in my latest film, "Dogma"—and what's Superman, if not the corporeal representation of a guardian angel?



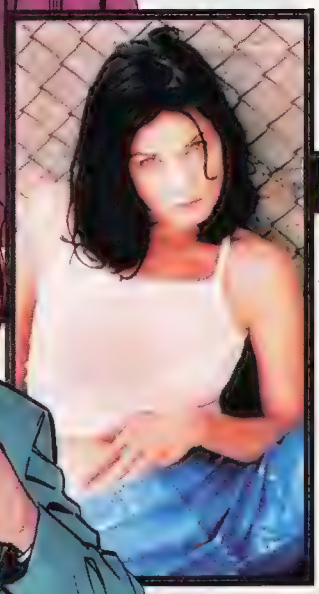
JASON LEE as BRAINIAC

I'd have to go with my man Jason Lee ("Mallrats," "Chasing Amy") for the living computer. Jason has the calm, almost monotone delivery Brainiac demands.



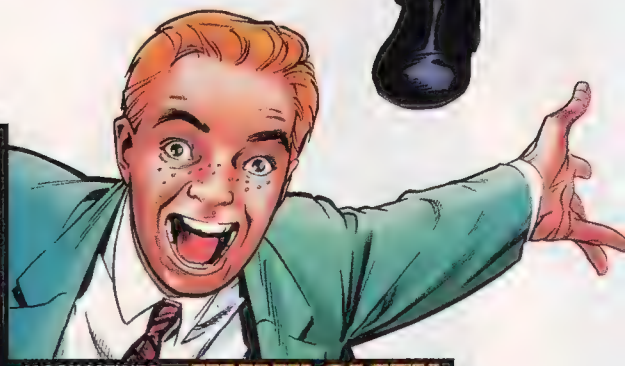
JACK NICHOLSON as LEX LUTHOR

Never worked with the man myself, but shave him bald and let him chew all the scenery in sight! You've seen him play the devil ("The Witches of Eastwick,") the lunatic ("Batman,") and the meticulously myopic ("As Good As It Gets.") Add 'em up, and you've got Luthor.



LINDA FIORENTINO as LOIS LANE

Okay, so there's a bit of an age gap between Linda and Ben. But if you've seen both "Men in Black" or "The Last Seduction," then you know Linda can be both frazzled and lovable, *and* cold and driven—qualities Lois tends to exhibit.

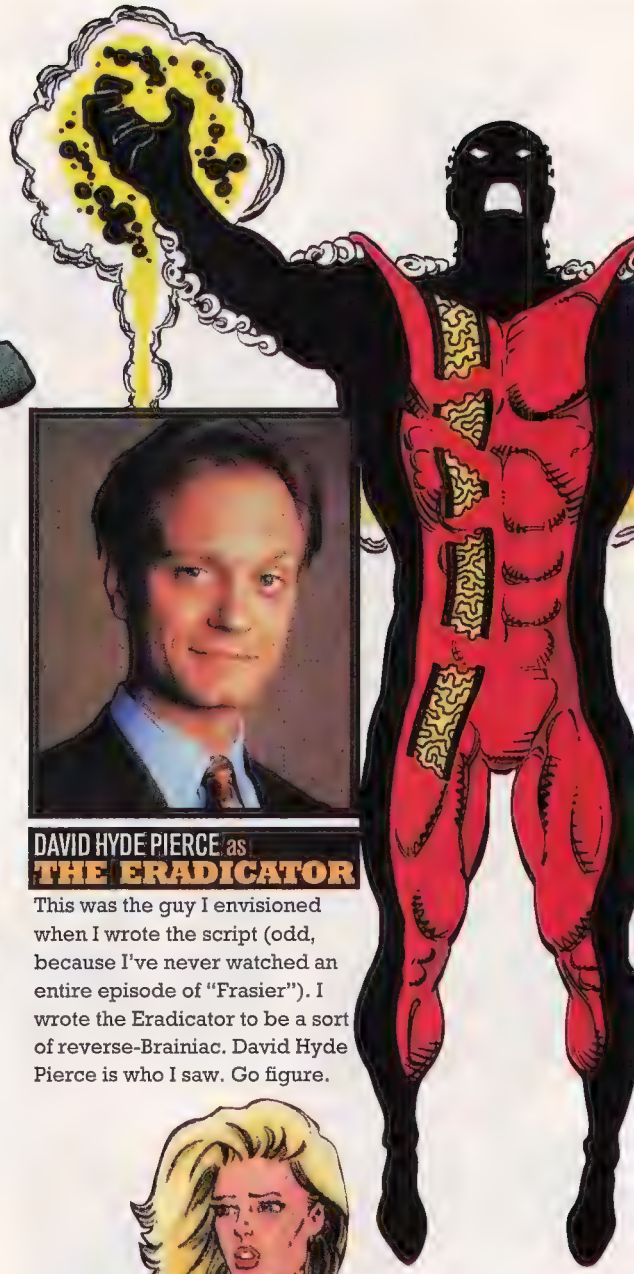


JASON MEWES as JIMMY OLSEN

Unorthodox, you say? Perhaps. But Jason Mewes ("Jay" of "Jay and Silent Bob") would make you finally understand why Superman'd cop to being Jimmy's "pal." Admittedly, we'd have to turn the language factor waaaay down, but who wouldn't want to trade "Golly, Miss Lane," for "Snootch to the nootch, Miss Lane!"?

FAMKE JANSSEN as **MERCY**

You saw her cracking spines in "GoldenEye," why not see her crack spines for Lex? Famke would make a beautiful and lethal Mercy (a character stolen from the phenomenal, current "Superman" animated series).

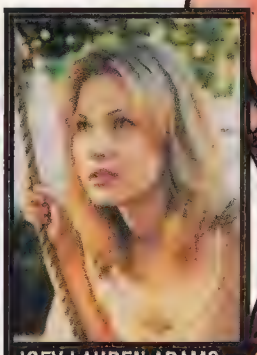


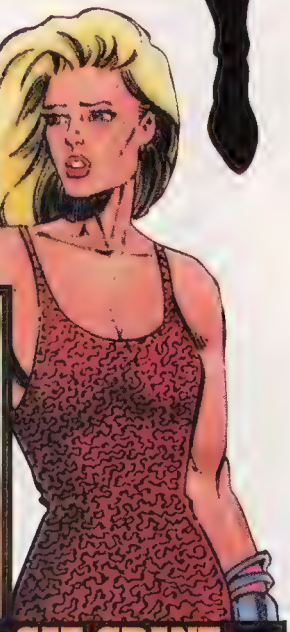
DAVID HYDE PIERCE as **THE ERADICATOR**

This was the guy I envisioned when I wrote the script (odd, because I've never watched an entire episode of "Frasier"). I wrote the Eradicator to be a sort of reverse-Brainiac. David Hyde Pierce is who I saw. Go figure.

JOHN MAHONEY as **PERRY WHITE**

He had only a small part in the script I wrote, but I'd go with John Mahoney ("Frasier") for the *Daily Planet* editor. He's a character actor I've always liked.





JOEY LAUREN ADAMS as **CAT GRANT**

I've worked with her a few times and Joey Adams ("Chasing Amy") could more than handle the gig.

BEN AFFLECK, JASON LEE, JACK N CHOLSON, FAMKE JANSSEN, DAVID HYDE PIERCE, MERYL STREEP, RENEE ZELLWEGER, BATMAN. PHOTOS COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION LINDA FIORENTINO © DAVIS FACTOR/OUTLINE; DEY LAUREN ADAMS © DARCY HEMLEY /OUTLINE; JASON MEWES, JOHN MAHONEY, MICHAEL KEATON. PHOTOS COURTESY FOTO FANTASY WALTER FLANAGAN PHOTO COURTESY OF KEVIN SMITH.

WALTER FLANAGAN as DOOMSDAY

Okay, okay. We'd go computer-generated, but for the voice, I'd have to use the one and only "Mallrats" fanboy. Tell 'em, "Steve-Dave."

MICHAEL KEATON as BATMAN

For his brief appearance, I'd go only with the one, true Batman: Michael Keaton. We've all seen his work in cape and cowl twice before. 'Nuff said.

MERYL STREEP AND RENÉE ZELLWEGER as TWO POLAR BEARS

Jon Peters wanted Brainiac to fight a pair of polar bears outside Superman's Fortress in the Antarctic (don't ask), so I thought Meryl Streep and Renée Zellweger (who were so great in "One True Thing") would suffice.

So, what have we learned? Well, apparently your chances of being in a "Superman" flick increase in direct correlation to whether we're friends or not. The moral of the story? BE MY FRIEND, DAMMIT!

Actually, I guess the moral of the story would be more along the lines of: If you don't know who Kal-El is, you shouldn't be producing "Superman." Ah, maybe there is no moral. Maybe it was all just an elaborate scheme to get a few pictures of my friends into *Wizard*.

Worked, didn't it?

When not trying to weasel his friends into some sort of comic movie, Kevin Smith is busy making his own films such as "Dogma," which should be out in fall '99. He's also busy finishing a run as writer on Marvel's Daredevil *(though he'll be back for a four-issue storyline in late 1999), as well as writing more* Clerks *stuff with Oni Press sometime in the future.*

COMING attracti

OUR PRAYERS ARE ANSWERED

Garth Ennis' wickedly funny 'Preacher' headed for Hollywood

Move over, Clint Eastwood. Jesse Custer and his posse will soon be riding out of the sunset and into a theater near you.

Preacher—the brainchild of writer **Garth Ennis** and artist Steve Dillon serving as the flagship of DC's Vertigo line—is on the Hollywood fast track to be made into a film. Not only has a screenplay been penned by Ennis, but a director and producers have been lined up. Offers have been issued to **Ben Affleck** ("Armageddon"), **Cameron Diaz** ("There's Something About Mary"), Robert Carlysle ("The Full Monty") and **Samuel Jackson** ("Pulp Fiction") for the roles of Jesse, Tulip, Cassidy and the Saint of Killers, respectively.

Best of all, the film will stay dedicated to the controversial and highly grotesque nature of the monthly comic book about Preacher Jesse Custer's search for God, literally, along with his girlfriend Tulip and Irish vampire pal Cassiday.

"I think the comic is close to perfect already," director Rachel Talalay said. "What's great about *Preacher* is the story. In a way I feel that only a European like Garth could have gotten this story and this epic feel about America."

Talalay's first foray into comic book adaptations came with the 1995 box-office disappointment "Tank Girl," which starred Lori Petty and was based on the Dark Horse comic series of the same name. The experience was a painful lesson for Talalay.

"For me, the movie is a weird hybrid," she said. "There's some stuff in there I like, but most is awful. Everyone was allowed to have their way with it. I fought really hard, but there came a time I just wanted to give up. I learned that some people don't care that this is your passion project."

That's why Talalay is making sure "Preacher" remains an independent production.

"It has to be independent, otherwise you run the danger of a studio losing track of what the magic in the bottle was in the first place," Rupert Harvey, the film's producer said. Harvey, along with Executive Producer H. Michael Heuser, have raised the film's $25-million budget through European investors to ensure autonomy on the project.

HOLY SMOKES Jesse Custer (above) is set to light the big screen in a script by *Preacher* writer Garth Ennis.

FACTS & FACES

CLOSE UP RACHEL TALALAY

RACHEL TALALAY produced films ranging from 1988's "Hairspray" to 1997's "The Borrowers." She's also done her fair share of directing, with work on "Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare" and the critically panned comic-based film "Tank Girl." Currently, she's directing a live-action "Preacher" film based on the irreverent Vertigo comic.

KATHERINE ZETA-JONES PHOTO COURTESY OUTLINE/© ALBERT SANCHEZ. "STAR WARS, EPISODE I–THE PHANTOM MENACE" PHOTOS ™ © LUCASFILM LTD., RACHEL TALALAY, BEN AFFLECK AND CAMERON DIAZ PHOTO COURTESY THE ENERETT COLLECTION

HOLLYWOOD AND TV STUFF THAT YOU CARE ABOUT

ons

Also serving as executive producers are comic book writer/film director **Kevin Smith** and his frequent collaborator Scott Mosier. The next step in the process is for Talalay to spend a month brainstorming the visual effects for the film, whicH covers everything from makeup to mechanical effects to computer-generated imagery.

"[Garth and I] have had long conversations about how to not do a bogus-looking Heaven," Talalay said. "One of the things I did with Jaime [Hewlett] and Alan [Martin, the 'Tank Girl' creators] and I want to do now, is have Garth and Steve involved as much as possible. Garth is partially involved with casting. Steve is involved with the visuals, he'll be storyboarding soon. It's a group community about how it's developed."

Talalay is hoping to shoot the film in the middle of 1999 in a dusty, dry location in the United States. And yes, Arseface will be in the film, complete with subtitles when he mumbles his sentences.

For comic fans, "Preacher" is the perfect comic movie just waiting to be made. For Talalay, "Preacher" is a shot at redemption.

"I want to make it in a way that's completely different than 'Tank Girl,'" she said. "For me, 'Tank Girl' was made wrong and I want to make 'Preacher' the right way."

■ **PATRICK SAURIOL**

SAY YER PRAYERS While execs are shooting to have Cameron Diaz (above) play Jesse's gal-pal Tulip, Ben Affleck may be collared for the lead.

STAR WARS PREQUEL WATCH

ANY DAY NOW

As the clock ticks down to "Star Wars: Episode I–The Phantom Menace" (May 21, 1999), fans are learning more about the Skywalker legacy, according to published reports. Here's the latest:

NO MORE SEQUELS When Star Wars was released in 1977, creator George Lucas remarked that the film was actually the fourth part in a nine-part saga. Now, Lucas has shocked fans by saying he never had any ideas for the post-"Return of the Jedi" stories and will likely never think of them, stating it would take another 10 years of his life (Lucas turns 55 in May). He says he'll simply move on to other projects.

THE OPENING Wanna know the opening screen text to "Phantom Menace"? Crank that John Williams soundtrack...

> A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away...
>
> STAR WARS
> Episode I: The Phantom Menace
>
> Turmoil has engulfed the Galactic Republic. The taxation of trade routes to outlying star systems is in dispute.
>
> Hoping to resolve the matter with the blockade of deadly battleships, the greedy Trade Federation has stopped all shipping to the small planet of Naboo...

THE VILLAINS What or who is the so-called Phantom Menace? It's the tag team of Darth Sidious and his frightening apprentice Darth Maul, the latter of whom gets to fight Obi-Wan Kenobi in a lightsaber duel in "Menace." Sidious is the evil string-puller of the movie, though only audiences will realize it.

STORY BITS "Menace" is slated to have two major action sequences: a secret finale battle scene and a "Podrace," where Anakin and crew race high-speed landspeeder-like vehicles (briefly seen at the start of the first movie trailer)....The Jedi Knights are the main policing force in the Old Republic. There are thousands of them during this period. Lucas compares them to the marshals of the Old West....While we won't see 10-year-old Anakin Skywalker transform into Darth Vader (it'll be in "Episode II" and "III," Lucas said), the seeds for the Old Republic's crumbling are sown....The three main planets in "Menace" are the desert planet Tatooine (home of the Skywalkers), Naboo (home of Queen Amidala, Luke and Leia's future mom) and the galaxy's capital planet Coruscant (pronounced "KOR-uh-sahnt," and home of the Senate)....Palpatine, in his pre-Emperor days, is described by Lucas as being a nice guy in this flick working as a Naboo Senator. ■ **PS AND THE *WIZARD* STAFF**

EX-X-WRITER UNVEILS ANIMATED 'DOT'S BOTS'

As *Uncanny X-Men* writer, **Steven T. Seagle** explored extravagant locales.

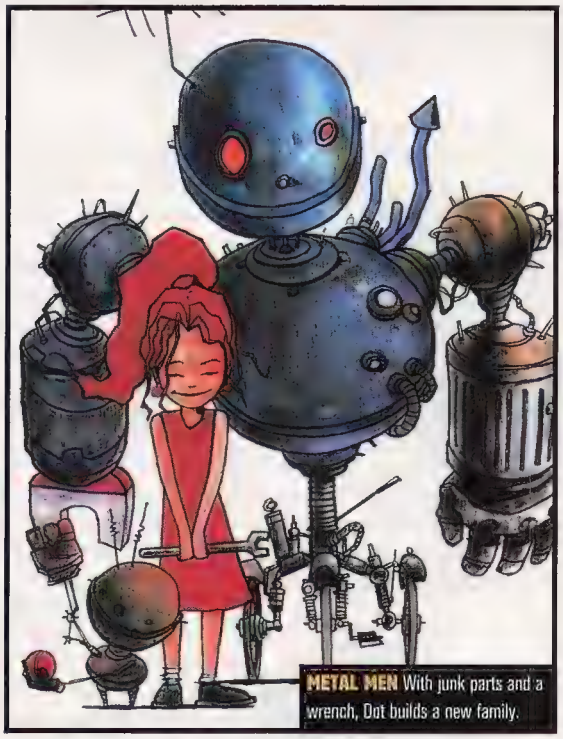
Now he's diving into completely uncharted territory—the realm of children's animation. Seagle recently created his first animated series, "Dot's Bots," due to debut in 1999 on a yet-to-be determined network.

"I was taken by the story of the guy who invented Velcro," laughed Seagle. "Supposedly, he was walking through a field and got little pricklies in his sock. Everybody else says, 'Ow, these pricklies are a pain in the [butt],' but one guy went, 'Hey, this is the way you make space-age fasteners.' So 'Dot's Bots' is the story of a girl whose grandfather owns a junkyard in Turbo City, and she kind of does the same thing. With junk parts, she indirectly unlocks the mysteries of artificial intelligence, creating sort of a surrogate family of robots out of grandpa's junk."

"Dot's Bots" will be computer animated by Mainframe, the folks behind "ReBoot," "Beast Wars," and "Battle Planets." Since the series was sold directly to the animation house, it's up to Mainframe to place it either on a network or in syndication. "It's going into production in January," Seagle said, "regardless of whether it's placed or not. We're shooting for release this year."

Although the series will tackle some serious issues, such as Dot dealing with the ramifications of creating proto-life, [sentient robots] the series will nevertheless be a pretty wild romp. "It's all just madcap adventure," Seagle said. "It'll be a half-hour show, featuring two 11-minute segments, which sometimes will interrelate and sometimes stand alone."

Although he hasn't quit the world of comics by any means, Seagle is rapidly becoming a player in Hollywood. "Last October I sold a movie ["House of Secrets"], an as-yet unnamed Fox TV show and 'Dot's Bots,' all within a week of each other, without having worked in any of those fields," he said. "So it was like, 'Well, good, now I get to learn three new trades.' I tell ya, that was one hell of a week." ■ SCOTT BRICK



METAL MEN With junk parts and a wrench, Dot builds a new family.

McCARTHY WAGES 'WAR'

Former comics artist **Brendan McCarthy** has found his niche in the world of animation.

McCarthy, a former Vertigo artist on *Z-Men* and *Rogan Gosh*, has been instrumental in the success of Mainframe Entertainment, serving as production designer for "Reboot," "War Planets" and the recently debuted "Weird-Ohs."

WAR CRY The animated "War Planets" began as a Trendmasters toy line.

"War Planets," which debuted last September, got its start when the toy company Trendmasters wanted to build a television show around its toy line. McCarthy designed characters to match Trendmasters' existing toys and the CGI [computer-generated imagery] -animated sci-fi series was born. The syndicated show appears on Saturday mornings in most markets.

"It's a huge epic, similar to 'Star Wars,'" McCarthy said. "It's just too good not to be a hit."

McCarthy also has high hopes for "Weird-Ohs," which will be the leading example of "stretch and squash animation," a type of CGI that's more fluid than the visuals in previous CGI shows, according to McCarthy. "It's more along the lines of the old-style Warner Bros., Chuck Jones animation," he explained of the show, which debuted on Fox in January.

"Weird-Ohs" is based on three teens in the town of Weirdsville who "drive around at maniacally high speeds. It's kind of a '90s 'Wacky Races.'"

Future projects for McCarthy include Mainframe's new 3D-CGI IMAX version of the classic tale *Gulliver's Travels*. McCarthy is also teaming with director George Miller to co-write the script and serve as production designer for "Mad Max 4." Although **Mel Gibson** hasn't committed to the project yet, McCarthy said both he and Miller will pitch their ideas to Gibson and that the film "is more in the spirit of 'Road Warrior' than 'Thunderdome.'"

What about a return to the format that helped make his name, comic books? "Maybe digital comics," McCarthy said. "What I can do digitally is far more interesting to me than what I can do in comics now. The possibility of constructing electronic comics for the Internet is something I've been in a lot of discussions with Mainframe about." ■ KARL WILLIAMS

TRAILERS...

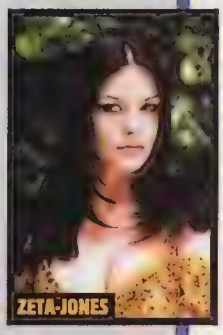
'DOOM' FOR McFARLANE?: "Do the Evolution", the animated Pearl Jam video that Spawn creator Todd McFarlane co-directed, is up for a Grammy for best video. As McFarlane works on his second video–this time for the band Korn–he's also in dicussions with the producers of the movie based on the video game *DOOM*. If a deal gets worked out, McFarlane would design the film's creatures and also have a hand in the storyline.

FRAG THE TOON!: Was it true that proposals for both "Supergirl" and "Lobo" animated series were being considered at the WB! network? "Batman" and "Superman" producer Bruce Timm confirmed both projects were in the early stages. Although no final decision by WB! suits had been finalized, the "Supergirl" series looked less likely to happen but "'Lobo' looks real good for a 13-episode commitment for next fall," Timm revealed.

SAILOR MOON-VIE: Geena Davis as Queen Beryl in a "Sailor Moon" film? It could happen if negotiations between DIC and Disney and the Japanese company that owns the "Sailor Moon" film rights, Kodansha, get worked out. "It's been a very slow process," explained Aaron Meyerson, the movie's producer. Once the rights are successfully negotiated, work will begin immediately on a script. Davis has met with Meyerson numerous times and she's interested, but remains unsigned.

MAXX DIRECTOR: Comic book artist Sam Kieth is changing professions. The Maxx creator is directing a film he wrote for B-film producer Roger Corman. The movie's main character is a boy with a metal arm and it will be filmed in Ireland. He's also developing films based on the Broadminded and Megan characters that appeared in *Friends of the Maxx*.

SHORT TAKES: Marvel is rumored to be developing more new episodes of "Spider-Man" and has reportedly green-lighted a proposed "Avengers" cartoon...Catherine Zeta-Jones ("The Mask of Zorro") may play Wonder Woman in the still-in-development live action movie...The list of directors who've been offered "Superman Lives" continues to grow: Michael Bay ("Armageddon"), Brett Ratner ("Rush Hour") and now Shekhar Kapur ("Elizabeth") have all been offered the gig but so far no one's biting... "The Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot" animated series will air on Fox this fall...Chris Carter reportedly wants Nicholas Lea (Krycek in "X-Files") to play the lead role in Carter's new sci-fi series "Harsh Realm"...James Cameron and Arnold Schwarzenegger are both involved again with developing "Terminator 3." Rumor has it that Madonna bought the film rights to Square Soft's *Parasite Eve* video game...Fox Television is considering a live-action "Buckaroo Banzai" series...A whopping 3.4 million videotapes of Disney's "The Rescuers" were recalled after someone spotted two frames showing a topless woman in the background...An animated series based on Kevin Smith's "Clerks" may be in your future. ■ PS



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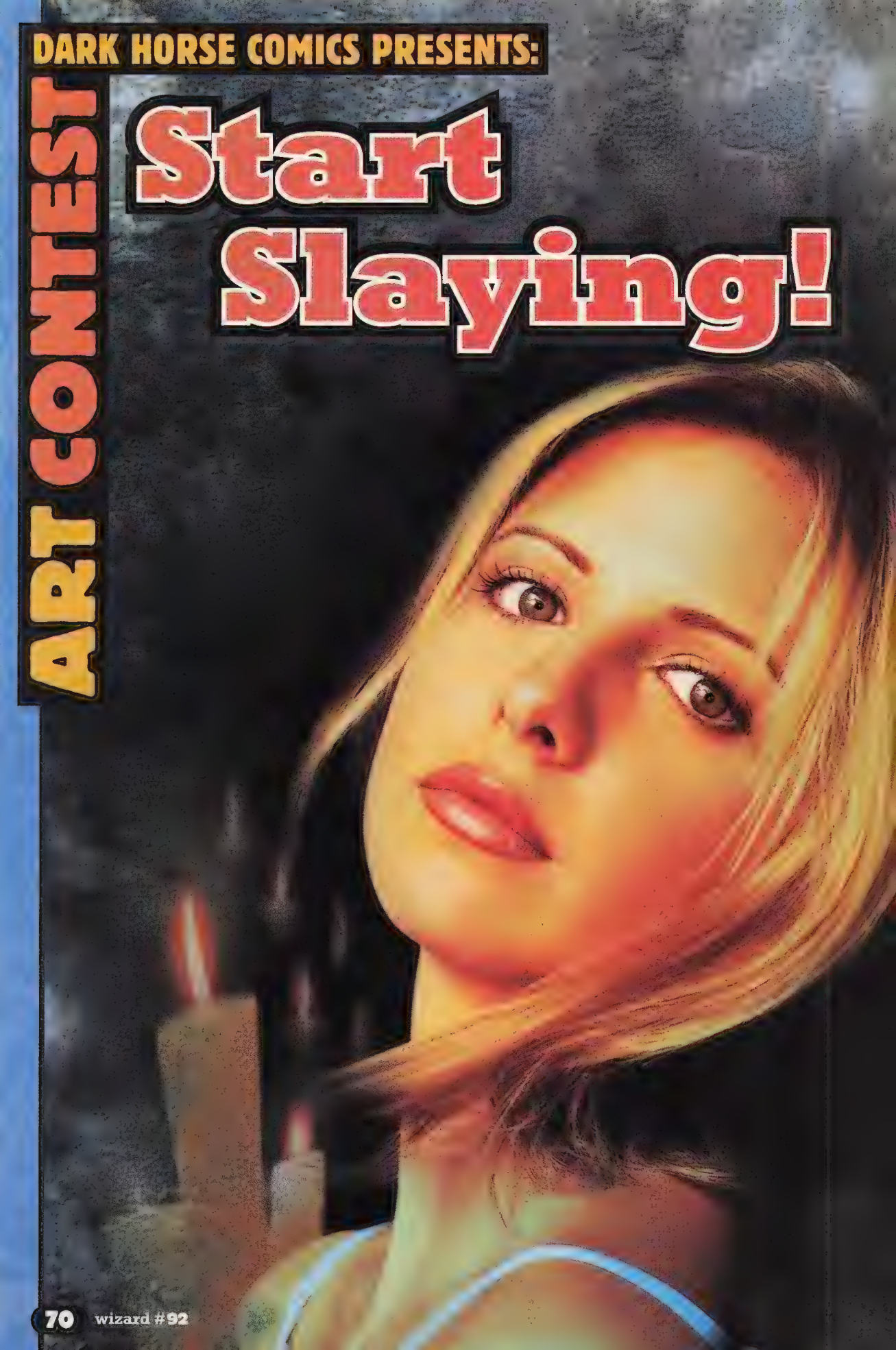
DARK HORSE COMICS PRESENTS:

ART CONTEST

Start Slaying!



PRIZES

GRAND PRIZE (1): One lucky slayer wins a glossy photo of "Buffy The Vampire Slayer" star Sarah Michelle Gellar signed by the mega-babe herself, a page of Joe Bennett *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* original art, *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* #1-#7 signed by writer Andi Watson, a copy of the *Buffy: The Dust Waltz* trade paperback, a Buffy T-shirt and a Buffy hat. Plus, the winning entry will be shown in "Slay the Critics," the *Buffy* letters page.

FIRST PRIZE (2): Two neck biters each win *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* #1-#7 signed by writer Andi Watson, a copy of the *Buffy: The Dust Waltz* trade paperback, a cool Buffy T-shirt and a Buffy hat.

SECOND PRIZE (5): Five stake-holders each win a copy of the *Buffy: The Dust Waltz* trade paperback, a Buffy T-shirt and a Buffy hat.

Okay, you wanna be chosen as the next slayer? Here's the deal. All you have to do is draw Buffy's next vampire opponent. Create the most terrifying vampire the world has never seen. Or, maybe in your mind it's Angel, you decide. Just make this vampire bigger and badder than anything Buffy has put a beating on so far. The stake is in your hands now, so get slaying!

We'll choose the most creative and cool-looking entries as the winners. Just keep these things in mind as you start drawing: Submissions can be on any form of unlined paper or posterboard and can be in any medium (oils, crayon, marker, etc.). Neon inks will not print. Artwork must not be larger than 8" X 11 1/4". Do not fold, bend or roll artwork. Mail flat. Also be sure to include two photos of yourself with the entry. Each photo (no Polaroids, please) should include your full name, date of birth, telephone number and address on the back.

THIS CONTEST IS SPONSORED BY DARK HORSE COMICS AND VAMPIRES EVERYWHERE. WE KNOW YOU'RE OUT THERE!

LAWYER STUFF THAT BITES

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Entertainment, Dark Horse Comics, their immediate families and people who can not come out in the sunlight. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip, e-mail address and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, and attach the form or card to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: "Start Slaying!" Art Contest, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your vampirific magazine. All entries and all rights thereto become property of Wizard Entertainment and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by April 30, 1999.** Wizard Entertainment is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, mutilated or blood-stained entries. Winners will be selected based on originality and creativity by Wizard Entertainment. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Winners will be notified no later than June 4, 1999. If an entrant, having been declared as a winner, does not accept the prize or the prize or prize notification is undeliverable, another entry will be selected and the first winner will be fed to a blood-starved creature of the night. It ain't gonna be pretty. In the event that a prize is not available or it becomes impossible for the sponsor to award the prize which has been designated, the sponsor retains the right to substitute a prize or product of equal value to the winner. Determination of whether a prize or product is of equal value is in the sole discretion of the sponsor. Winning entries will be selected on or about May 14, 1999.

For a list of winners, available after May 14, 1999, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: "Start Slaying!" Art Contest Winners List, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

ENTER NOW!

Fill this out, attach your entry and photos and put it all in an envelope. Send it to:

"Start Slaying!" Art Contest,
c/o Wizard Entertainment,
P.O. Box 118,
Congers, NY 10920-0118

DEADLINE IS APRIL 30, 1999.

"Start Slaying!" Contest Entry Form

CONTEST DEADLINE April 30, 1999!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

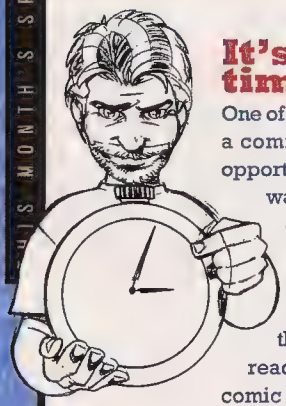
Phone Number (with area code) _____ E-mail Address _____

DID YOU ATTACH YOUR ENTRY AND PHOTOS?

BASIC TRAINING

MIKE WIERINGO SHOWS YOU STORYTELLING

When I was a kid, one of the things that attracted me to comic books—besides the incredible artwork and compelling, epic stories—was the way each artist had his own way of conveying the necessary information needed to tell the story. Get it? Story-*telling*. An artist's storytelling style can be as unique as a fingerprint. An artist's choice of how to present the story is one of comics' most important aspects. Let's talk about some things to keep in mind when telling *your* stories...

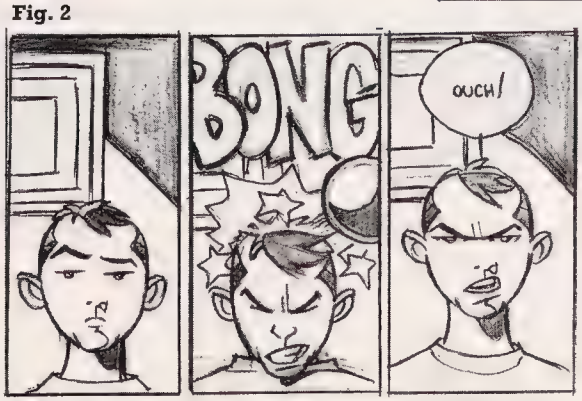


It's about time...

One of the many storytelling tools a comic book artist has is the opportunity to *pace* a story any way he chooses. Stretching or compressing a moment or scene is something an artist can do for immediate impact tomanipulate the way a page flows for his reader. This is unique to the comic book. You don't need to rewind a tape or hit a reset button on a video game; all a reader has to do is flick his eyes back to the beginning of a scene to experience it all over again.

Fig. 1

Fig. 2



Here, I've taken a simple action: a fella has a ball fall on his head unexpectedly. It's a simple scene to execute, but how it's presented can make that simple scene a bit more complex. The panel where the ball actually *hits* this poor schnook is the crux of the scene. But adding a couple of "beats" (like "heartbeats") before and after panel 3 stretches out the moment, adding a bit of humor (figure 1). A much more abbreviated version (figure 2) gets the same info across, it just takes less time to tell.

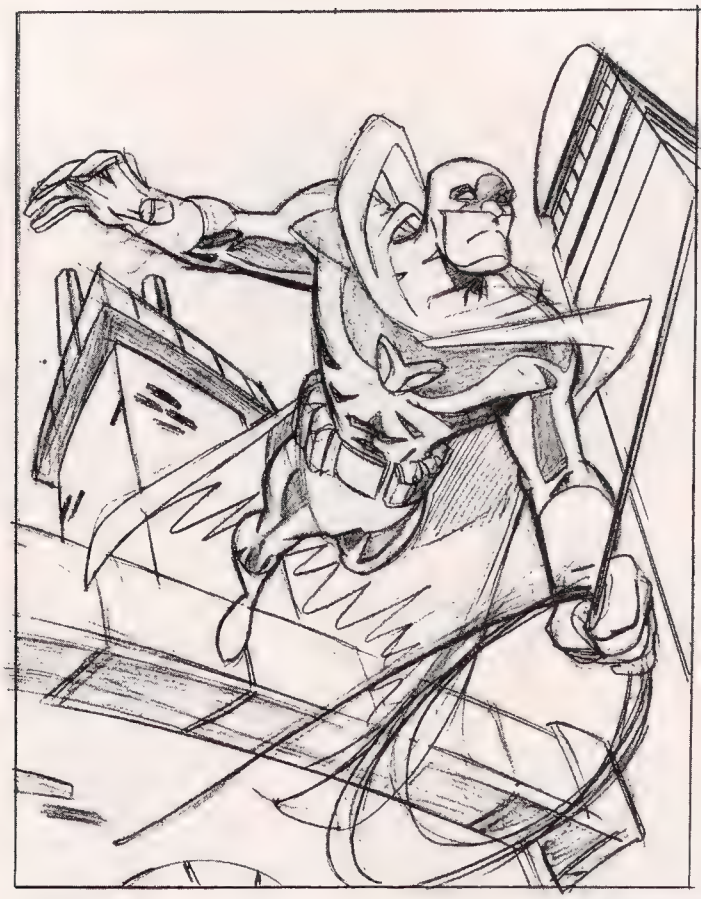


Fig. 3

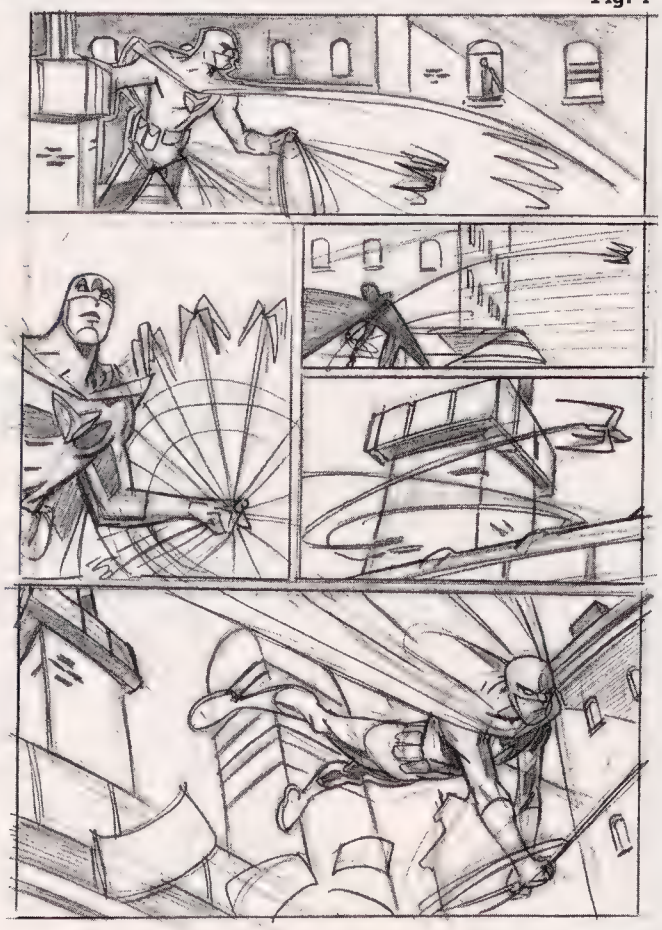
Show What?

Every artist has his own way of interpreting a scene. Suppose we have a plot where the writer instructs the following: "Artist, give us a visual of our hero, The Owl, grimly swinging out off a roof over the city. Do this however you like—just establish that he's in the city, it's night, and he's just swung off the roof."

Now, some artists would take this opportunity to use the page for a big, dramatic splash, as I've done here in figure 3. It gets across everything the writer asked for, all in one big shot. But there are a lot of other ways to tell this story.

I'm from the "let's hold the reader's hand and show 'em everything" school of storytelling, so I've added a version (figure 4) where we see four panels of The Owl actually winding up and tossing his grappling hook to another roof and then swinging off in panel 5. It isn't really necessary for the reader to see this, but I'm a big fan of animation (Disney and Japanese) and a presentation like this reminds me more of animation or storyboards for a movie.

Fig. 4



Out Of Sight

Sometimes, however, what you *don't* show can be more effective—or have more impact—than actually showing an action. This allows readers to achieve "closure." In other words, it let's them fill in the information with their own minds. Sometimes leaving more to the imagination can be a good thing. Here, I've drawn a hard-boiled detective-type giving some big thug a knuckle sandwich. You can see the thug recoil from the punch—you can even make out a little spit or blood. Looks like it hurts!

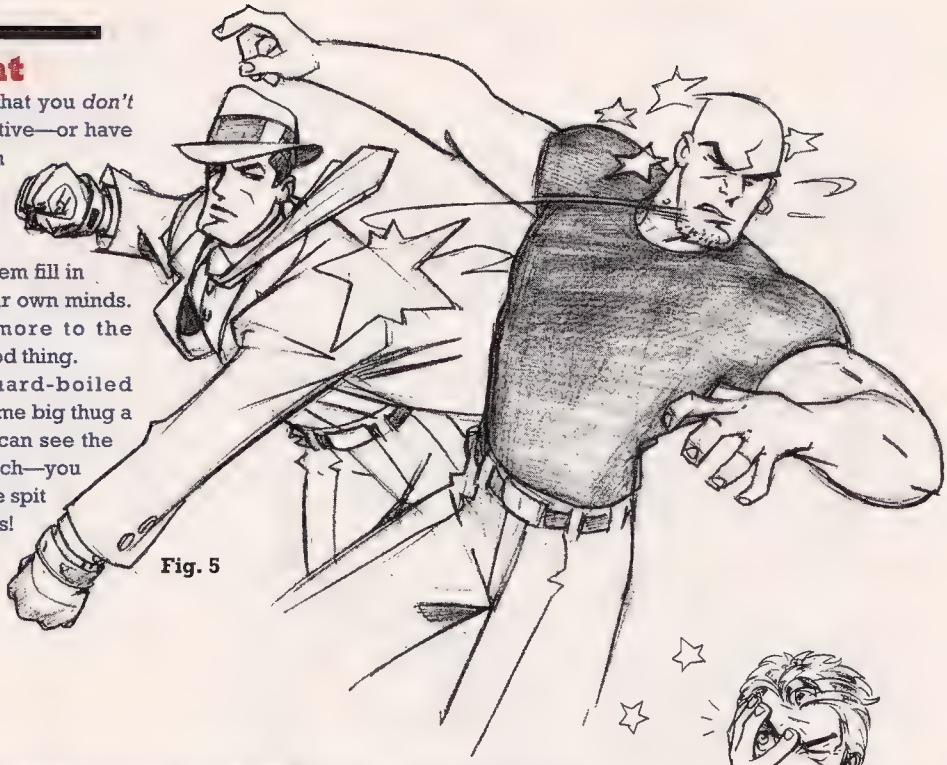


Fig. 5

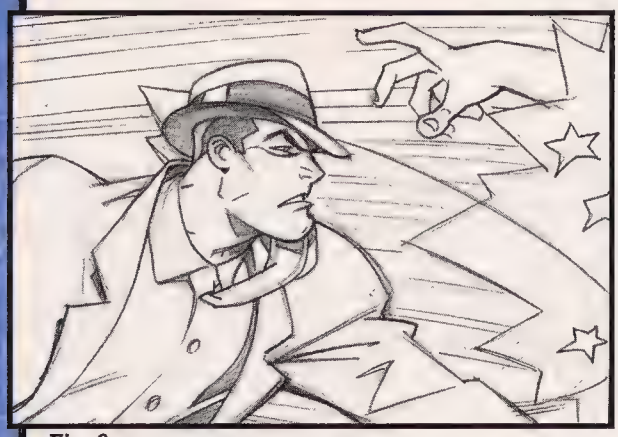


Fig. 6

But what if we don't show the impact? You can see our detective throwing his punch (Figure 6), but we don't really see its effect beyond seeing the thug's hand and some stars as he gets his clock cleaned. This lets *us* fill in the info. For all we know, his nose is spewin' blood, his eyeballs are poppin' outta their sockets, his head's comin' completely off...well you get the idea. (Whew!)

And here in figure 7, we even apply a little of the pacing exercise—stretching the moment, while at the same time leaving the violence largely unseen. The two lugs come at each other—POW!—and the thug's flat on his back! Ol' "Mike Hammer" there's got quite a punch!

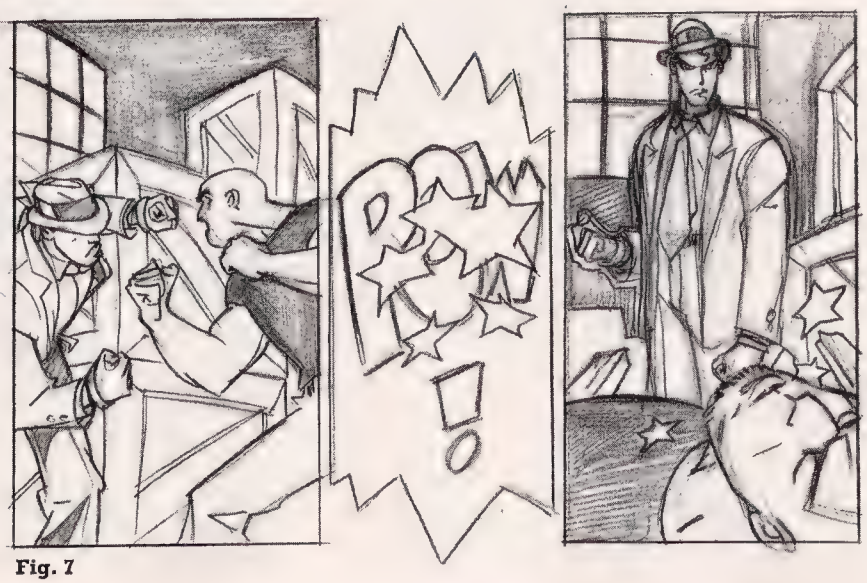


Fig. 7

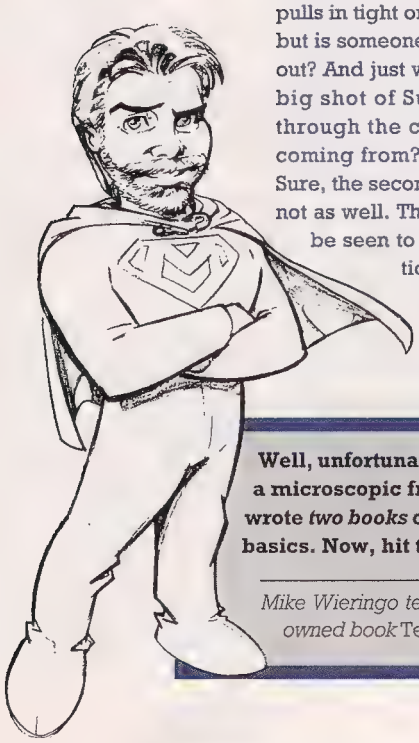
Super Scenario

I've got two more examples of conveying information in a scene. One's very clear with lots of information for the reader, and the other one is rather vague. You decide which one works best for you.In figure 8, we see Clark Kent working in an office when he hears a distress call in panel 1. Note the pencil and paper Clark's holding and the background elements which let us know he's in an office. Panel 2: Clearly, Clark is sneaking into a janitor's closet. Panel 3 reveals he's changing! Panel 4 is our big "money shot" of Supes flying away from a building (clearly the *Daily Planet*), ready for action!

Fig. 8

Our second version (figure 9) leaves quite a bit more to the imagination and requires the reader to fill in a lot of gaps. Panel 1 is a close-up of an eye—is it Clark's or someone else's? Too vague to tell. Panel 2 pulls in tight on the janitor's closet, but is someone going in or coming out? And just who is it? Panel 3 is a big shot of Superman streaking through the city sky. Where's he coming from? Where's he going? Sure, the second version works, but not as well. The whole page has to be seen to get enough information to accurately feel the flow of the scene.

Fig. 9



Well, unfortunately, it looks like I'm out of space. As far as storytelling goes, this is just a microscopic fraction of what you should keep in mind. There's a reason Will Eisner wrote *two books* on the subject! Remember, build your own "language" as you learn the basics. Now, hit those drawing boards!

Mike Wieringo tells a lot of stories. Check out his storytelling techniques in his all-new, creator-owned book Tellos, *expected to hit stores this summer and published by Image Comics.*

Drawing BOARD

Who needs the pros? This is the showcase for WIZARD READERS' ART

Set your phasers to "creepy." In *Wizard* #88, we asked you, the pie-eating masses, to draw a new, horrific character to join Marvel's team of supernatural heroes, the Supernaturals. Entries for the "Recruit the New Supernatural!" contest poured in from all over the globe and we racked our brains to pick the best artwork.

The best entry walks away with a slew of magical *Supernaturals* stuff, including a signed artwork, comics and some spine-tingling trade paperbacks. Runner-ups also net some highly superific prizes—prizes any sane man would want to be entombed with.

Thanks to everyone who entered. Rest in peace knowing we enjoyed looking at each and every entry. Keep 'em coming.

THIS ONE CAUGHT OUR EYE

GRAND-PRIZE WINNER

NEPHYTHYS

MATT HUGHES

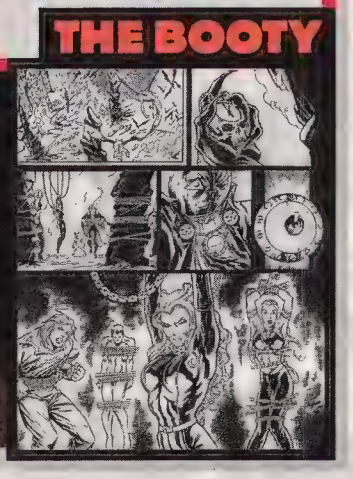
Greenville, SC

MATT ... as *Wizard* winner

MATT ... as Will Hunting

MATT DAVIS PHOTOS COURTESY OF FOTO FANTASIES

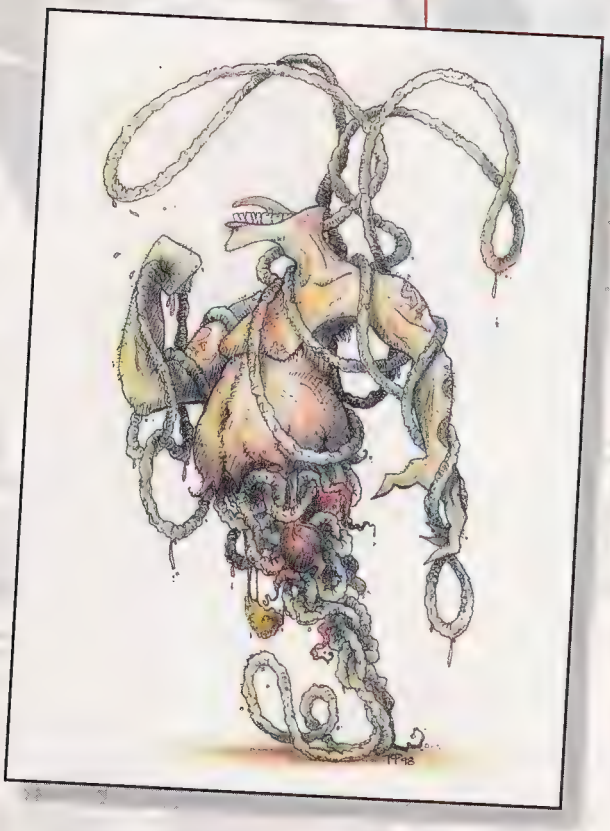
THE BOOTY



RIGOR MORTIS
QUINCY ARMSTRONG, Orlando, Fla.

BLACK MARY
MARC BAECHLER, Phoenix, Ariz.

GOR
TOD C. PARKHILL, Richmond, Va.



Want your art to appear in future issues of *Wizard*? Think you've got what it takes? (Hey—quality *and* originality count, y'know.) Then send your "Drawing Board" entries to:

SUBMIT

Drawing Board
c/o Wizard Entertainment
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920-2064

And follow these rules or else: Use any form of unlined paper or posterboard (no larger than 8 inches by 11 1/4 inches) and any medium (oils, crayon, mustard, etc.—but not neon inks). Put your name, full address and TELEPHONE NUMBER on the back of your piece, and mail it flat to avoid damage. **You must also include a color photo of yourself.** All entries are non-returnable and become the property of Wizard Entertainment. Employees of Wizard Entertainment are the sole judges of the contests, and all decisions are final. Got it? All right, good luck!

WIZARD ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS:

ART CONTEST

Draw WIZARD #100!

PRIZE

GRAND PRIZE (1): Win the opportunity of a lifetime! The chance to draw the cover of the incredible anniversary issue, *Wizard: The Comics Magazine* #100! Not only that, we'll pay you $500 to do so. You'll be paid like the superstar artists who draw our covers each month. And winning has its privileges—your name will appear on the masthead of the issue so you can show it to Mom and, to top it off, we'll send your name and phone number to the fine folks at Marvel, DC, Top Cow and Dark Horse, and we'll put in a good word for you. This could be your big break!

HERE ARE THE KEYS TO BECOMING THE NEXT COMIC SUPERSTAR:

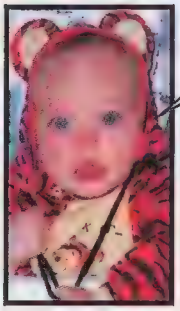
DO:

- Pick your favorite single character and draw him or her. You can draw Superman, Wolverine, Darth Vader, Witchblade, or anyone you choose.
- Make sure it's the best damn thing you've ever drawn in your whole life, because we are gonna be super-critical in our judging. Hey, it is gonna be on our cover!
- Make sure you draw this character in an action pose.
- Send submissions on any form of unlined paper or posterboard.
- Send your submission in pencil. This is very important! Any other medium will be discarded.
- Mail your submission flat.
- Include two photos of yourself with the entry. Each photo (no Polaroids, please) should include your full name, date of birth, telephone number and address on the back.

DON'T:

- Draw any teams.
- Ink or color your drawing. We want pencils only.
- Send computer-generated images, crayon drawing or any other medium but pencils!
- Send artwork larger than 8" X 11 1/4".
- Fold, bend, or roll your artwork.

We'll pore through the entries and choose who we think is the best artist as the winner. This lucky dog will then be contacted by the gurus of cool covers, the *Wizard* art department who will assign the special anniversary issue mystery cover character. The image for this cover is a closely held secret known only within the hallowed halls of *Wizard*, and soon, by the lucky winner. This guru will fill you in on all the details of what is required to be a *Wizard* cover artist. Then, a few months later, you'll see your masterpiece on the cover of our biggest anniversary issue ever!



EVEN I CAN ENTER?!?

HELL, YEAH! THIS CONTEST IS SPONSORED BY *WIZARD*, A BUNCH OF BIG BABIES.

ENTER NOW!

Fill this out, attach your entry and photos and put it all in an envelope. Send it to:
"Launch Your Career!" Art Contest
c/o Wizard Entertainment,
P.O. Box 118,
Congers, NY 10920-0118.

FINE LEGAL LINES

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Entertainment, their immediate families and writers. Sorry, but we don't need any help writing the headlines on the cover, just drawing the image. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip, e-mail address and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, and attach the form or card to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: "Launch Your Career!" Art Contest, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries and all rights thereto become property of Wizard Entertainment and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by April 30, 1999.** Wizard Entertainment is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Winners will be selected based on originality and creativity by the original and creative folks at Wizard Entertainment. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Winners will be notified no later than June 4, 1999. If an entrant, having been declared as a winner, does not accept the prize or the prize or prize notification is undeliverable, that person is an idiot, this is the chance of a lifetime, and another entry will be selected. In the event that a prize is not available or it becomes impossible for the sponsor to award the prize which has been designated, the sponsor retains the right to substitute a prize or product of equal value to the winner. Determination of whether a prize or product is of equal value is in the sole discretion of the sponsor. Winning entries will be selected on or about May 14, 1999

For a list of winners, available after May 14, 1999, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: "Launch Your Career!" Art Contest Winners List, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

PHOTO BY PAUL SPINELLI

"Launch Your Career!" Art Contest Entry Form

CONTEST DEADLINE APRIL 30, 1999!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-Mail Address _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

DID YOU ATTACH YOUR ENTRY AND PHOTOS?

COOL STUFF THROUGH THE MAIL

WOW!
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than
Buffy!

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This time in Sunnydale, it's not a vampire stalking the gang, it's a new monster in town called "Stinger." And Stinger is bent on putting an end to the school bully. Can Buffy save the bully from the sting of Stinger? And how is Xander involved? Find out in this exclusive story only available from *Wizard* in conjunction with Dark Horse Comics! And only available for a limited time when you fill out the order form, enclose three U.S. bucks and stake it, er, stick it in the mail.

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GET IT NOW!

LAW OF THE UNDEAD

No reproductions of this coupon will be accepted. This coupon must be sent in the accompanying envelope. With this coupon, you can order two comics. You may put additional coupons in the same envelope. Remit by check or money order only. Canadian orders remit $4.00 per copy, other foreign orders remit $6.00 per copy. All payment must be in U.S. funds drawn on a U.S. bank. Make all checks payable to Wizard Entertainment. Offer good only while supply lasts. Please allow eight-to-12 weeks from date of expiration for delivery. Changes of address will not be forwarded unless Wizard Entertainment is notified in writing by May 21, 1999.

THIS OFFER EXPIRES MAY 21, 1999

WORLD-CLASS ACTION

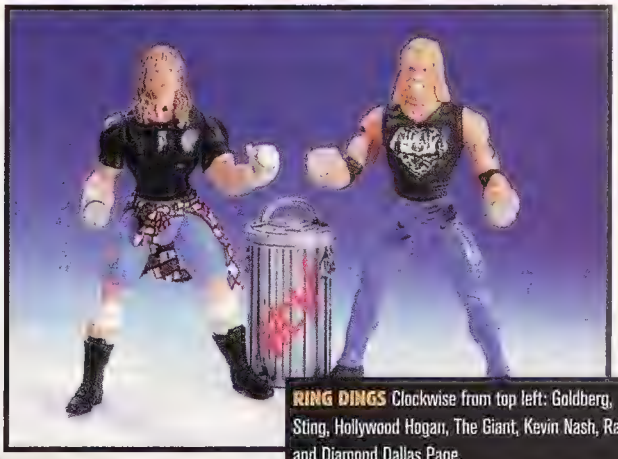
Wanna know what the best toy bet is for 1999? Wrestling toys. Leading the pack of wrasslin' toy makers is Toy Biz, which just acquired the license to make WCW action figures. The 'Biz has loaded its WCW figures with action features and special accessories. Everyone from **Goldberg** and **Bret "The Hitman" Hart** down to **Konnan** and **Booker T** are on the way throughout the year. Here's a peek at what Toy Biz has planned:

Ring Masters–Toy Biz transforms wrestlers into their trademark namesakes for the Ring Masters line. Goldberg totes construction gear and a giant jackhammer in honor of his finishing move, while Bret Hart arrives in hitman garb, complete with two huge, honkin' guns.

Slam 'n' Crunch–Buff Bagwell, Konnan, Sting and Goldberg round out this assortment, and are packed with special accessories such as trash cans, lockers and dumpsters that crunch when slammed.

nWo/WCW Twin Packs – Some of the greatest moments in WCW history are brought to life in these two packs, such as Sting and Hogan's meeting at Starrcade, the Battle of the Giants with Kevin Nash and the Giant at Souled Out and Randy Savage's partnership with his former manager Elizabeth.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg! Fans can look for stylized cartoon figurines called Headringers, Talking Keychain Wrestlers, poseable die-cast figures and playsets that re-create each wrestler's entrance into the ring.



WCW PHOTOS COURTESY OF TOY BIZ. BLOCKS PHOTO BY PAUL SCHIRALDI.

RING DINGS Clockwise from top left: Goldberg, Sting, Hollywood Hogan, The Giant, Kevin Nash, Raven and Diamond Dallas Page.

BY TOM PALMER JR.

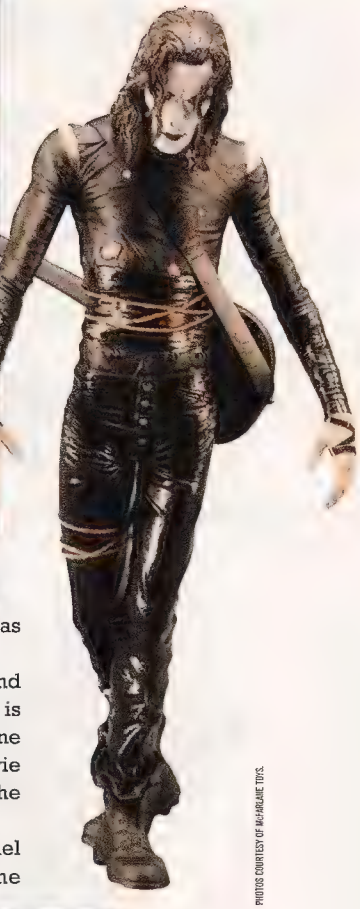
SPAWN GETS LUCKY

Looks like Spawn fans will be cursing up a storm this February.

That's when McFarlane Toys will release the 13th assortment of Spawn action figures, featuring characters from the *Curse of the Spawn* comic series. This is the first assortment in a long while to be entirely made up of characters taken from the Spawn comic universe, and McFarlane is putting all sorts of extra touches into this assortment. You'll have to pick among a second Curse of Spawn figure (the original was in Series 8), Jessica Priest with Mr. Obersmith, the mammoth Zeus, Medusa (complete with bendable snake hair), Hatchet, Raenius and the Desiccator. Or you can just get them all.

SPAWNING GROUND Counter-clockwise from bottom left: Medusa, Curse of Spawn, Desiccator and the father of all gods, Zeus.

SPAWN PHOTOS BY PAUL SCHRULER



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MCFARLANE TOYS.

TODD McFARLANE: MOVIE TOY MOGUL

Proving that there's more to life than gruesome monsters, McFarlane Toys has released pictures of several special action figures planned for '99.

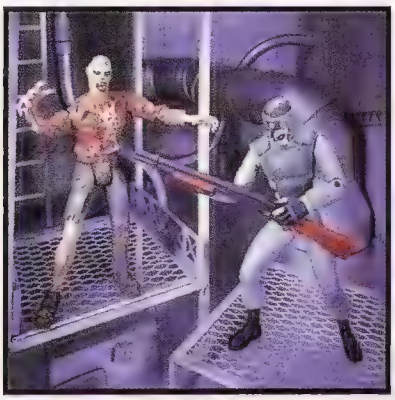
Joseph Michael Linsner's sexy Dawn gets the plastic treatment this spring and comes packaged in a collector's case with a special backdrop. Also on the way is Cogliostro, who will be the first all-new action figure offered through the McFarlane Toys Collector's Club this summer. And headlining the next assortment of Movie Maniacs figures, due this summer, is J. O'Barr's The Crow as he appeared in the original movie starring Brandon Lee.

There're lots more on the way from McFarlane, including toys from the sequel to "Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery," the original "Psycho," the "Scream" franchise and Michael Myers from the "Halloween" flicks.

McFARLANE'S MAGIC Creepy heroes Dawn, Cogliostro and The Crow are the newest additions to the McFarlane Toys stable.

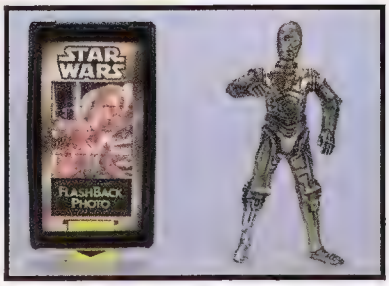
'RESIDENT EVIL II', PART 3

One of Toy Biz's most popular video game toy properties, Resident Evil, gets another go-around this summer. The third helping of action figures from Capcom's *Resident Evil II* video game continues the trend of packaging human characters with creatures, including Ada Wong with Ivy, a grotesque plant creature; the hidden character Hunk with a zombie; and Sherry Birkin with a mutated version of her dad William. The assortment is rounded out by the black trench-coated Mr. X, who can transform into Tyrant with a few special snap-on parts.



EVIL TIDINGS From left: Little Sherry Birkin and a killer mutant, Ada Wong and Ivy and Hunk with Zombie.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF TOY BIZ.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HASBRO.

STARSTRUCK Yes, it's more Star Wars toys featuring, from left: Anakin Skywalker, C-3PO and Jabba the Hutt's Palace.

STAR WARS HOO-HA

Fans waiting anxiously for the official low-down on Hasbro's toys from "Star Wars: Episode 1—The Phantom Menace" will have to make do with scouring the Internet for bootleg photos. But if you're interested in Hasbro's latest additions to the action figures from the original trilogy, here's the scoop. Anakin Skywalker and C-3PO join the Flashback line this spring, which features classic characters paired with their prequel counterpart via a transforming slide. Also on the way is a special cardboard diorama of Jabba the Hutt's Palace, complete with a brand-new Han Solo in Carbonite figure. Fans worried that the flow of classic figures will halt when "The Phantom Menace" hits theaters, have no fear. Hasbro plans to continue the Power of the Force line for the foreseeable future.

HOMEMADE HERO OF THE MONTH

THE BEST OF FAN-MADE ACTION FIGURES

ARTIE AND LEECH

Ron Watkins, Pinckney, Mich.

Looks like Artie and Leech are ready for a night on the town.

Both o' these li'l critters were made from the Will Robinson figure from Trendmasters' Lost in Space toy line, with a few modeling compound additions and a new paint job to make their stylin' outfits.

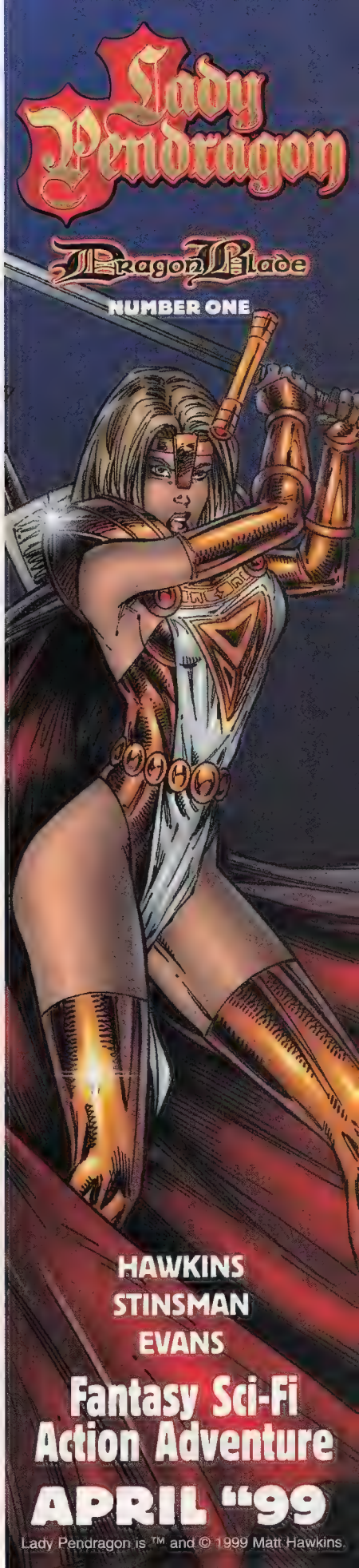
As winner of our "Homemade Heroes" contest this month, Ron wins a Hammer statue from Dark Horse Comics.

Sponsored by Dark Horse Comics.

Hey!

Do you want in on the fun? To enter the homemade figure contest, send at least TWO well-lit, clear, color photographs (**No Polaroids, and put 'em in cool or funny poses!**), along with your name, address, a DETAILED DESCRIPTION of how you created your figure, your full phone number (including area code) and even e-mail address to:

HOMEMADE HEROES
c/o Wizard Entertainment
P.O. Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118



stuff

COMIC BOOK MERCHANDISE YOU CAN BUY...

By David Borak and the *Wizard* Staff

AVAILABLE AT YOUR LOCAL COMICS RETAILER

Who among us doesn't like stuff? Whether it's The Absorbing Man's Paper Towels, The Human Target's Lawn Dart Set or Resurrection Man's Cemetery Plots, we're all suckers for comic-related merchandise. Each month, *Wizard* will strive to show you the latest and super-neatest in comic book statues, posters, pins, magnets, shirts and other goodies.

In short, if it's cool, and if it's stuff, you'll find it here.

GREAT (ALAN) SCOTT!

This month, look for the Golden Age Green Lantern Statue ($195) featuring the first Green Lantern, Alan Scott! This cold-cast porcelain statue is the final installment in a trilogy of GL statues from DC Comics (the first two were of Hal Jordan and Kyle Rayner). Sculpted by William Paquet and based upon designs by artist Steve "The Dude" Rude, it stands 12" X 7" with base. Scott's statue is limited to 2,000 copies.

RING THING One reason alone to get this Golden Age GL statue: it does "The Hustle."

TIN MARVELS

Marvel Comics and the Tin Box Company bring you a blast from the past with Marvel Lunch Boxes! Each classic lunch box ($6.99 each) comes with full-color art from the '60s and '70s (when lunch boxes ruled). You'll find large lunch box tins for Spider-Man, Iron Man, the Hulk, Captain America, the X-Men and the Fantastic Four. Look for them in schoolyards everywhere right now.

BOXED IN Lunch, Marvel style! But what happened to including those snazzy Thermoses?

LITTLE LEGIONNAIRES

DC Comics presents the first in a series of PVC sets modeled on the Legion of Super-Heroes! The Legion of Super-Heroes PVC set ($39.95) features seven of the 30th century's greatest heroes—Lightning Lad, Saturn Girl, Cosmic Boy, Chameleon Boy, Mon-El, Brainiac Five, and Colossal Boy. These non-articulated, full-color figures range from 3 7/8 inches to 4 1/8 inches in height and stand on individual bases. The set, available July 21, comes packaged in a full-color box that resembles the original Legion of Super-Heroes Headquarters.

FUTURE PLASTIC These teeny Legion PVCs prepare to fight miniscule Imskian villains.

'W-WHERE'RE MY ARMS!!!' Ah, quit being a baby, Iron Man. You're just a bust.

STARK STATUE

Marvel's greatest armored adventurer Iron Man (a.k.a. Tony Stark) goes porcelain with Bowen Designs Iron Man Mini-Bust ($30). The 5 1/2-inch cold-cast porcelain statue captures Iron Man in his most well-known suit of red and yellow armor. These statues are sculpted by master artist Randy Bowen, come fully painted and are limited to 2,000 copies. They're available right now.

HOT STUFF!!!!

PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

GOOD SAMARITAN, GREAT STATUE

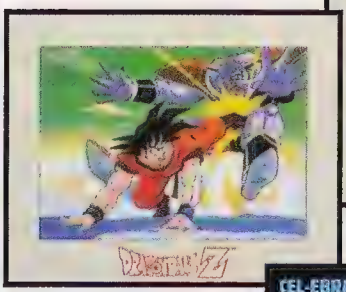
Bowen Designs presents the Astro City Samaritan Resin Statue ($150), based on the art of Brent Anderson and Alex Ross. The heroic Samaritan stands 14 inches tall on a custom Astro City logo base. This fully painted statue is limited to 1,000 units, plus an additional 200 that will bear sculptor Randy Bowen's signature and sell for $200. Samaritan does his good deed this month!

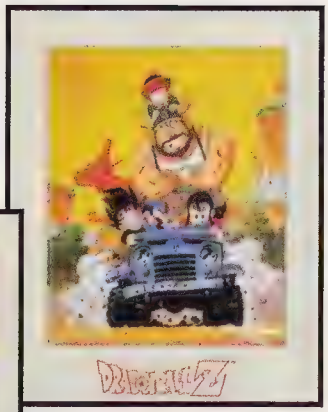
STARRY KNIGHT Astro City powerhouse strikes a regal pose for his resin statue.

SUPER, FANTASTIC POSTER

Rocket into adventure when comic giants DC Comics and Marvel Comics present the monster-sized 34" X 32" Superman/Fantastic Four Poster ($6.95). Painted by Alex Ross over pencils by Dan Jurgens, this poster features Superman and the Fantastic Four racing into space and the world-eating villain Galactus presiding over the destruction of Superman's home planet of Krypton. The artwork is taken directly from the wraparound cover to the *Superman/Fantastic Four* comic; the poster will be available this month.

'GANG WAYYYY!!!' Even Galactus'll wanna reach out for this Jurgens and Ross poster.





CEL-EBRATION Now you don't have to go to Japan to get artwork from TV shows "Sailor Moon" and "Dragon Ball Z."

ANIMANIA CELS!

Simitar Entertainment presents a series of Chroma-Cels ($14.98 each) from the popular anime shows "Dragon Ball Z" and "Sailor Moon." The two Dragon Ball Z cels feature Goku with his family and Goku fighting Captain Ginyu. You'll also find two Sailor Moon cels—Sailor Moon and the Scouts, and Serena's Wedding Day. Each Chroma-Cel comes matted and shrink-wrapped complete with seals and certificates of authenticity. All of these full-color 8" X 10" cels are available this month.

FRAMED! Ani-babe Nakiko gets us all caught up in this Darkminds poster.

MINDPOSTED

From Dreamwave Productions and the dark mind of Pat Lee comes Darkminds Poster #1 ($5.99), which features the cyborg cop Nakiko from the cover of the first issue of *Darkminds*. This highly detailed poster measures 24" X 36" and was penciled by Pat Lee with inks by Alvin Lee. Look for it this month.

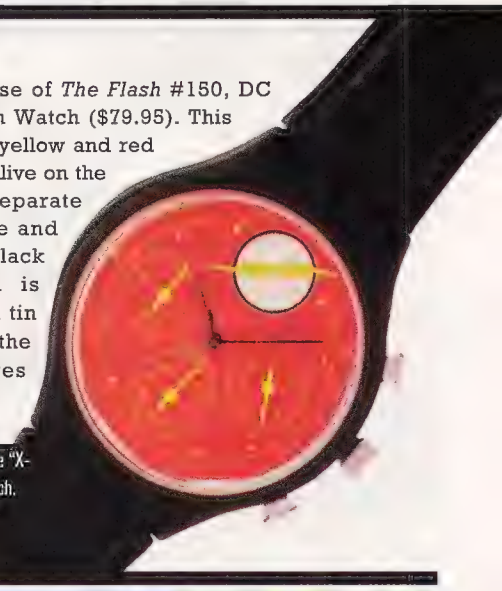
BAT-CASH Too expensive first time 'round? This statue's $40.

BATMAN RETURNS, ONLY SMALLER

The beautiful (but costly) Batman: The Dark Knight Returns Statue has been re-released by DC Comics in a miniature (and more affordable) form. The cold-cast porcelain Batman: The Dark Knight Returns Mini-Statue ($39.95) replicates the larger statue, but measures only 4" X 4" X 3 1/2". Like its predecessor, the statue was sculpted by William Paquet, based on designs by Frank Miller and features an older Dark Knight and the female Robin brandishing a slingshot. Look for it on June 23.

TIME FLIES

Coinciding with the release of *The Flash* #150, DC Comics presents The Flash Watch ($79.95). This speedy watch features the yellow and red symbol of the Fastest Man Alive on the face and includes three separate dials for the hour, minute and second. It comes with a black leather watchband and is packaged in an aluminum tin with the Flash symbol on the cover. Look for it in stores in May.



MINUTEMAN Don't miss out on things like "X-Files" and "Baywatch" with DC's Flash watch.

Check your local stores for availability of all these funky-fresh products. Or ask your friendly neighborhood comic store to special order 'em for ya!

YO! Are you a company that sells stuff cool enough to make the grade here? Let us be the judge of that. Send any info and/or samples to:

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-indieWIRE

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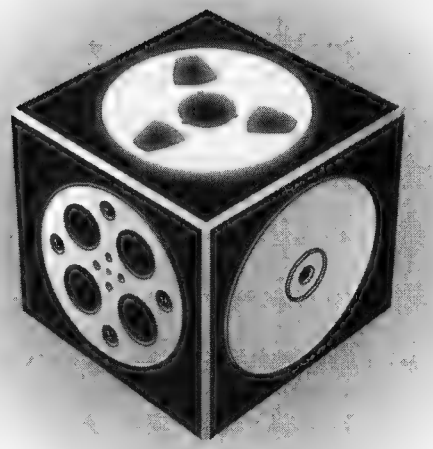

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video STUFF

By Matthew Danish

Video killed the radio star, but who's complaining? Certainly not us. Welcome to "Video Stuff," a column where we let loose with news, previews, reviews and super-secret codes for the hottest, most spanktacular console and PC games around. Fire up the controllers...it's video game time.

SHADOWY NEWS

Down on the bayou, there's evil brewing. Acclaim's supernatural-themed *Shadowman* is gearing up for a summer release on the PC, PlayStation and Nintendo 64. The game, a third-person, action-adventure shoot-'em-up, revolves around supernatural hitman Mike LeRoi, the star of Acclaim Comics' now-canceled *Shadowman* comic.

Guy Miller from Acclaim's Iguana studio is quoted as saying, "We based the game on the first six issues of the revamped *Shadowman* comic by Garth Ennis and Ashley Wood. It was a relatively easy translation because the basic gameplay elements were all in those six issues; we simply extracted them, screwed around with them a little, added some blood, brains and bone fragments, stirred in a dash of our own ideas, and simmered the whole sickening mix for 18 months over a white hot flame."

Shadowman features 20 levels, with environments ranging from New York to the London Underground and various otherworldy sites. Each level, Iguana reps said, is inhabited by a serial killer.

THE MACSTATION?

Macintosh computers just got a little more play-friendly. The Connectix Corporation recently debuted the Connectix Virtual Game Station, a software emulation program allowing Mac users to play some PlayStation games on their computers.

The Game Station, which is compatible with G3 Macintoshes, PowerBooks and iMacs, allows users to play PlayStation games using keyboards, mice, or joysticks and game pads. In addition, players can customize their input options with this program, selecting the controller buttons or keyboard keys needed to play a game.

Not all PlayStation games will play at maximum efficiency, Connectix representatives say. Connectix released a list of approximately 50 games which work well with the program; compatible titles include *Metal Gear Solid*, *Spyro the Dragon*, *Tomb Raider II* and *Twisted Metal III*. "While the product is not a perfect substitute for Sony PlayStation consoles," Connectix President Roy McDonald said, "we believe our customers will be pleased with the experience of using games with Connectix Virtual Game Station on their Macs."

As of press time, the program was not out in stores. It was, however, being sold at January's MacWorld computer convention for $49.

MAC DADDY *Spyro the Dragon* ain't gonna take no PC guff. Now it can be played on a Mac.

TROUBLEMAKER The mother of all video games might allow users to bomb Saddam Hussein.

SLAM SADDAM?

Video game company 3DO might be bringing the Gulf War to American shores. The company has trademarked the title "U.S. vs. Iraq" and may use it as the name for a possible upcoming video game. 3DO has yet to decide if such a war simulation will even be produced, but 3DO President Trip Hawkins has been quoted in the popular press as saying that programmers have been working on the project.

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SOUTH PARK

MANUFACTURER: Acclaim
PLATFORM: Nintendo 64
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $59.99, available now

There's a bad moon on the rise. A colossal comet is careening toward South Park, and the soul-singing Chef is awash with anxiety. The poop is about to hit the propeller!

Select foul-mouthed cartoon heroes Kyle, Kenny, Stan or Cartman (from TV's hit show "South Park"), and prepare to defend South Park, Colorado against hordes of gobbling turkeys, robots, evil clones and UFOs. A first-person shooter (think *Turok* with cursing pre-teens), *South Park* asks players to hurl snowballs and shoot other wacky weapons to defeat enemies while moving through maze-like levels (or episodes) collecting pick-me-ups and making mayhem. When all the turkeys and robots—and level-boss turkeys and robots—are pegged with weapons, a new level begins. It's all standard fare, but done with enough wackiness to entice most gamers into checking this puppy out.

The only real complexity to the game is its array of gimmicks and gadgets. There is a bouncing dodge ball to throw, a toilet-plunger gun, as well as a super-blaster that fires cows. These nasty-minded kids will even whiz on snowballs (the game features authentic zipper and urination sounds) to create a powerful, disgusting, projectile. In addition, there is a Mr. Hankey Christmas Poo Shield and an occasional can of Beefcake that will increase any character's *authoritah*. While these neat weapons add to the game's single-player mode, they make the multi-player option—which is arguably the game's best selling point—a laugh riot.

TRY IT... If you groove to "South Park," the thought of pegging your enemies with urine balls or *Turok 2*, drop the Cheesy Poofs and get *South Park*.

'PARK' IT Is Cartman (above) too "big boned"? Giant turkeys (below), too absurd? Kill 'em both in Acclaim's *South Park*.

ODDWORLD: ABE'S EXODDUS

MANUFACTURER: GT Interactive
PLATFORM: Sony PlayStation
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $34.95, available now

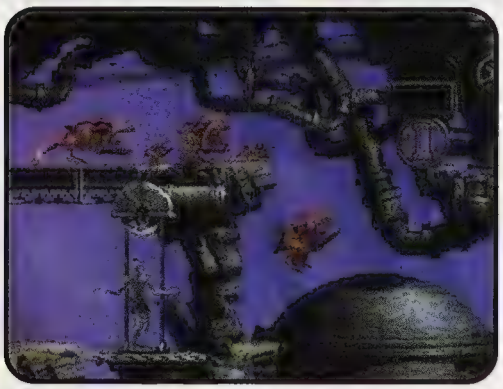
Abe is back! The Glukkons of the rapacious Magog Cartel are still oppressing Abe's fellow Mudokons, enslaving them and forcing them to produce SoulStorm Brew. Only Abe (the star of the epic PlayStation game *Oddworld: Abe's Oddyssey*) can set them free by blowing up the slave-powered brewery.

Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus is an incredibly complex (and sprawling—the game comes on two CDs) 2-D platform game in which the green-skinned Mukodon Abe penetrates the evil corporations' core. Along the way he meets and saves Mudokons who can help him traverse obstacles. By leading a Mudokan to the game's "bird portals" and chanting a song, Abe sets it free, which leads to the game's most interesting feature, called "Gamespeak."

To free Mudokons, Abe must talk to them, selecting dozens of messages with button combinations. Each of these commands, along with run, jump, crawl and dive, will be needed to complete levels, and whole families of creatures can be harnessed and controlled.

The game's enemies, mysterious and creepy Sligs, Scrabs and Paramites, which must be seen to be believed, also have accessible speech keys enabling them to communicate with other creatures. In addition, Abe can break wind by pressing the PlayStation's "X" button; by activating farts and drinking from the SoulStorm machines, players will discover hidden powers to make *Oddworld* even more of a fun world.

TRY IT... If you like *Oddworld: Abe's Oddyssey*, *Brave Fencer Musashi* or *Super Mario Bros.*-type platformers, you'll love *Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus*.



'LET MY PEO-PLE GOOOOO...' Abe returns to kick some Glukkon ass and free his people in the latest *Oddworld*.

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THE COMICS MAGAZINE #93

JLA
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JOE MADUREIRA

BATMAN/
DARKNESS
COVER BY
MARC SILVESTRI

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PINKY AND THE BRAIN: WORLD CONQUEST

MANUFACTURER: South Peak
PLATFORM: PC
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $39.99, available now

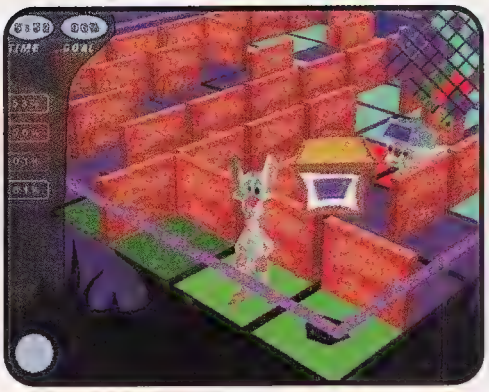
Got nuthin' to do after a hard day's work? Well, why not try to take over the world with cartoon rodents Pinky and the Brain (from TV's "Pinky and the Brain")?

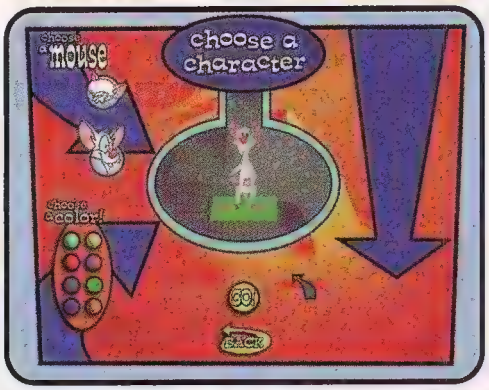
Okay, so it's not exactly world conquest, but it's the next best thing. With *Pinky and the Brain: World Conquest*, players can match wits against the computer or some friends to see who's the top mouse in the maze. Users can either play as the dumb-as-dirt Pinky or super-genius the Brain and run around a variety of 3-D mazes trying to turn all the floor blocks to a predetermined color.

If it sounds simple, it's not. The game imposes time limits, frustrating walls serve as obstacles and oil slicks are included to make it challenging...and that's just in the game's single-player mode. In the multi-player mode, players and their friends (over phone lines) can take to the mazes for a variety of challenging games such as "Glue Mice" and "Quicky Maze."

TRY IT... If you like the "Pinky and the Brain" TV show, the *Bomberman* series or multi-player games such as *Quake*, hatch a clever plot to get *Pinky and the Brain: World Domination.*

It's a blast to see a bunch of Pinky and Brains running around the same maze trying to outwit each other (and to hear Pinky's patented NARF!). In the multi-player mode, would-be world conquerors get to use a variety of weapons against their opponents such as Super-Speed and Super-Strength Vials and Slippy Oil Backpacks. All told, the game makes for some interesting diversion—that is, until the mice scurry out from their hidey-holes and really do subjugate the planet. ■ **Mike "The Knife" Fasolo**





MOUSE TRAP No, it ain't that freaky scene from "The Shining," it's *Pinky and the Brain.*

SPECIAL MOVES & SECRET CODES

CHEATSHEET

THE TOMB, RAIDED

Squeeze a little more juice from PlayStation's *Tomb Raider III* with some neat cheats guaranteed to take players to the next level.

All WEAPONS CHEAT
- Enter gameplay.
- Press L2, R2 twice, L2 four times, R2, L2, R2 twice, L2, R2 twice, L2 twice, R2, L2 twice, R2.
- Lara Croft will scream and players will have access to all weapons.

LEVEL SKIP
- Enter gameplay.
- Press L2, R2, L2 twice, R2, L2, R2, L2, R2, L2 four times, R2, L2, R2 four times, L2.
- Lara will say "no," and players can then skip levels.

ROGUE CHEATS

Want to unlock a host of super-neat cheats for Nintendo 64's *Star Wars: Rogue Squadron* video game? Well, try these cool codes which you'll have to input on the game's "Password" screen.

Unlock the *Millennium Falcon* as a playable ship
- Type in "FARMBOY"

Play with unlimited lives
- Type in "IGIVEUP"

Play as an AT-ST in a bonus level
- Type in "CHICKEN"

Play all the game's music
- Type in "MAESTRO"

webline

IT CAME FROM THE WORLD WIDE WEB

www.walnutworld.com/wildscooter/saddam/

Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein would be proud to bomb this site out of existence.

members.aol.com/acmelabs1/index.html

Visit Acme Labs for tons of cool information on Pinky and the Brain.

www.geocities.com/TelevisionCity/Studio/1278/

Fight for foul-mouthed Kenny's (from "South Park") right to life!

www.scifi.com

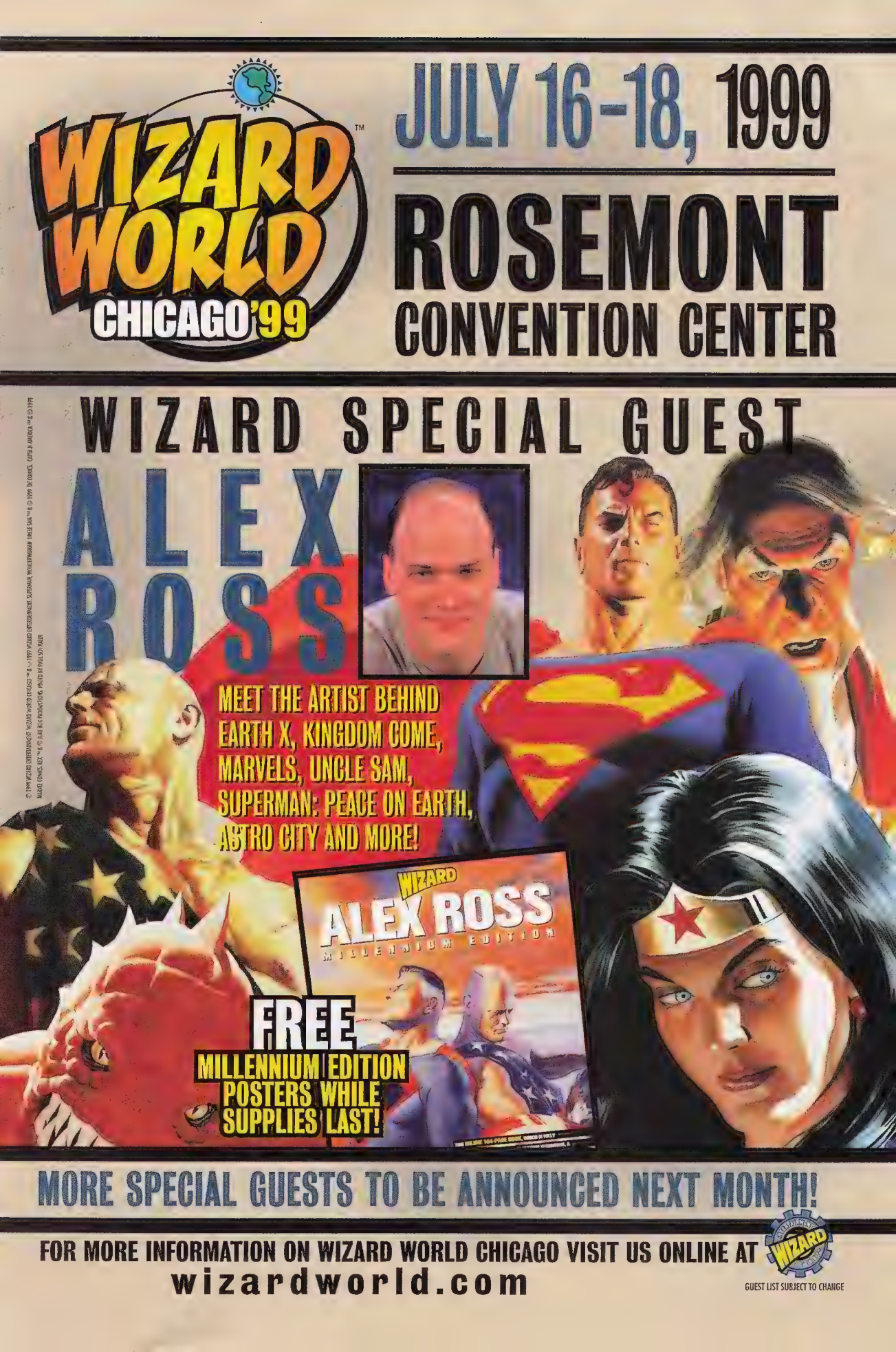
The Sci-Fi Channel's official Web site.

www.xfools.com

A great "X-Files" resource. The truth is out there!

www.ludwig.ucl.ac.uk/st/StarTrek/Vulcan/Spock.html

Aphoristic kernels of Vulcan wisdom from Mr. Spock of "Star Trek." ■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AVENGERS

KURT BUSIEK*
AVENGERS, ASTRO CITY, IRON MAN

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TOP 10 HEROES & VILLAINS

This list doesn't track the number of copies which a specific character sells each month. It doesn't pay attention to any kind of sales meter. This list is a roster of the 10 comic book characters with the strongest fan following—nothing more, nothing less.

1 WITCHBLADE

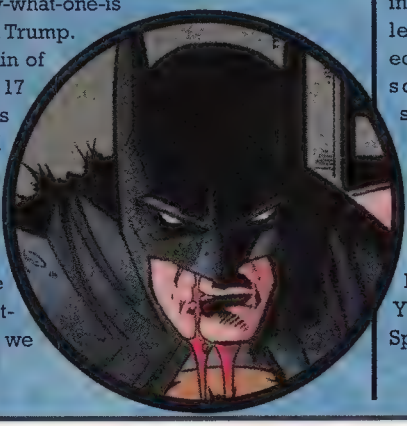
Y'know, even without any o' them protective Witchblade tendrils covering her ever-so-graceful mug, Sara Pezzini still looks like one tough chick. *And* she can roll out an upper-lip sneer that'd make Elvis proud! Not only that, but Sara rates high on the ass-kick-o-meter. As a tough-talkin', street-walkin', no-donut-eatin' (gotta watch that girlish figure, y'know) New York City cop, Sara was lockin' bad guys in the clink long before she ever linked up with the Witchblade. And now that she's got that mystical gauntlet (that totally combats evil, don'tcha know), she's a lean, mean, arrestin' machine. So snarl all you want, baby. You da man—er, woman. (Geez, that sounds weird.)

2 WOLVERINE

Since Jeff Matsuda started penciling *Wolverine* (with #133, for those of you not on Marvel Standard Time), the look of everyone's favorite furry, psycho Canadian has been...a little bit different. Maybe it's those ear-things on his mask? Yeah, that's it! Matsuda hit the scene and Wolvie's ears sprouted like a junior-high basketball player hitting puberty. Wolvie's ears are so big, you can barely find a comic book panel (or a "Top 10 Heroes & Villains" circle) big enough to hold 'em. But not to worry—this Wolverine is new and improved. With the big ears, he gets improved TV reception, and can even pull in free HBO to boot. It cuts his cable bill in half.

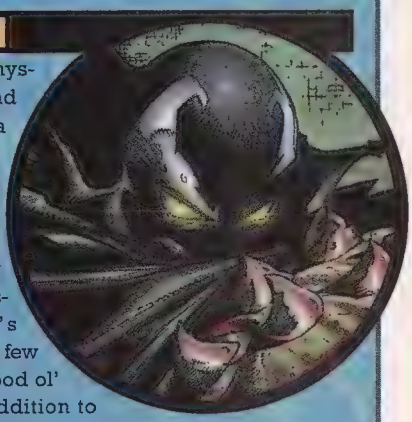
3 BATMAN

Comic social *faux pas*—revealed! Can ya believe Batman went through the *entire* issue of *JLA* #26 with spaghetti sauce all over his face? True! Now this is the *last* thing you'd expect from Bats. 'Cause in his daytime identity as wealthy socialite Bruce Wayne, he sports more prim-and-proper, I'm-gonna-use-a-finger-bowl-even-though-you-common-peasants-don't-know-what-one-is attitude than Donald Trump. It looks like the strain of starring in, oh, about 17 books a month is *finally* taking its toll on the ol' Dark Knight Detective. Not that we're makin' excuses for the guy. Hey, if he had just used a Wet-Nap in the first place, we wouldn't be havin' this conversation.



4 SPAWN

Always cloaked in mystery, that Spawn. And always cloaked in...a cloak, too, come to think of it. Yep. When it comes to dominating comic racks *and* leading the cutting edge of fashion accessories for today's superhero on the go, few can compare to good ol' Al Simmons. In addition to being ahead of the cusp on the oh-so-Goth cloak, Spawny-Guy also pioneered the spikey-things-on-gloves fad, and was wearing Bruno Magli shoes long before O.J. Simpson ever heard of 'em. Yeah, from the runways of Paris to comfy-cozy Spawn Alley, Spawn's the most fashion-forward comic star out there.



5 MAGNETO

He's back. He's bad. He's got a cool helmet. He's got his own mini-series. He's got his own *country*, fer cryin' out loud. He's Magneto, master of magnetism, and he's back where he belongs—on center stage. And now that Marvel's top evil mutant has conquered the island nation of Genosha, his quest for the ultimate goal can finallybegin: a long distance rate cheaper than 10 cents a minute! And we're willing to bet ol' Maggy gets it, no matter *what* that "Murphy Brown" chick has to say about the matter.

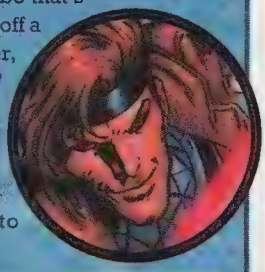
6 DAREDEVIL

Nice Daredevil. Niiiice Daredevil. See what happens when you leave the superhero chained up in the back yard without feeding him? They can turn surly on ya. Not that Daredevil has to worry 'bout his vittles these days. Since his rebirth under the "Marvel Knights" banner, ol' Hornhead has been the darling of the comic fan set, and getting all the best tables at all the best restaurants. A few months ago, DD was scarfin' Alpo. These days, it's steak-'n'-lobster all the way.

7 FATHOM

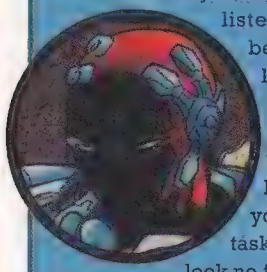
Aspen Matthews, the deep-sea beauty known as Fathom, has a problem. If she keeps spendin' all her time in the water, she's gonna have to walk around with her head tilted to the side to get the water out of her ears. And what's that lead to? You guessed it—neck problems. Hey, we know her benefits package includes being drawn by Michael Turner (a serious plus), but does she get a health plan? These are important questions.

8 GAMBIT



He's been the X-Men's mystery man for a decade. He's drooled after Rogue for what seems like 53 years now. And he's made delicious crawfish gumbo that's so spicy, it can peel all the primer off a Buick. He's the Cajun card-chucker, Remy LeBeau. But the one thing ol' Gambit never achieved? He's never been the star of his own ongoing series. Until now. *Gambit* is up and running, and mutant maniacs everywhere are tuning in to Remy's solo adventures.

9 DEADPOOL



The most efficient mercenary in the 'biz? We'll put our money on Deadpool! Talk about double duty! With this nifty headgear, the 'Poolman can tune in and listen to the Mets game while he beats, folds, spindles and mutilates assorted bad guys. And when the game's over, he pops in a *Spanish Made Easy* cassette and learns a foreign language while kicking ass. If you're looking for the perfect multi-task assassin for the new millennium, look no further than Deadpool!

10 HAWKEYE

Hawkeye started out as a bad guy. Then he joined the Avengers, and became a good guy. Now he's leading the Thunderbolts, a team of former bad guys who have become good guys, except for the member or two (such as Moonstone) who are still bad. Confused? Well, here's one thing there's no confusion about—no matter if he's been good, bad, or somewhere in-between, Marvel's master marksman has always been a down-to-earth, cut-the-crap kinda guy. And that's something everybody likes.

MORT OF THE MONTH

ONE LAME-ASS CHARACTER

THE VOICE

Look! It's a big, fat, glommy, fat, sweaty, fat, 12-sandwich-eatin', fat stereo salesman who's *soooo* proud of his product that he wears two Pioneer sub-woofers around his neck!

Nah. It's just The Voice, a stupid Marvel villain who could...uh...amplify his voice. And sometimes make people believe he was telling the truth and compel them to believe him. With this lame-ass ability to be louder and more obnoxious than the average fat guy, The Voice got his blubbery ass handed to him by Captain America and even (Tee-hee!) Ant-Man.

The Voice could also eat 53 pounds of potatoes in one sitting and strike fear into the hearts of Sizzler employees who run all-you-can-eat buffets. But that hardly counts as a superpower.

MORTOMETER

picks

THE MUST-READ COMICS SHIPPING IN MARCH

book of the month

NIGHTWING #31

DC COMICS Poor Nite-Wing. He wanted to be a superhero but ended up a super lead-eater. Back from an extended tour of the intensive care unit, this two-bit loser wants revenge. Better unzip the hero-sized body bag and fire up the hearse! By Chuck Dixon, Scott McDaniel and Karl Story. "Dick Grayson and [his former landlord] Clancy finally go on a real date," Dixon says. "They get closer than ever and Clancy reveals her most secret dreams. And just in case this gets mistaken for 'Dawson's Creek' the comic book, Nite-Wing goes on an extraordinarily violent rampage against the guys who tried to kill him." **$1.99**

ASTRO CITY #17

WILDSTORM/DC Get yer sweaters out and show your support—the Mock Turtle's loose in Astro City! Actually, this high-tech creep just blew into town to kick over some anthills and devalue the standard of living for the reformed metallic villain Steeljack. Vegas odds say the Turtle's got something to do with Astro City's Black Mask supervillain killer, and Steeljack's only got his life to bet with. By Kurt Busiek, Brent Anderson and Will Blyberg. **$2.50**

THE AUTHORITY #1

WILDSTORM/DC Hey, it's a WildStorm book without one of those annoying internal capital letters! How about that? Anyway, this new team is birthed from the ashes of the hero group StormWatch. (See, there's that infernal internal cap!) Its members, Jenny Sparks, Jack Hawksmoor, Shen Li-Min and four others, will defend the Earth from all sides or buy cemetery plots trying! By Warren Ellis, Bryan Hitch and Paul Neary. **$2.50**

AVENGERS #16

MARVEL Photons ain't just for torpedoes anymore. Ex-Avenger Photon (formerly Captain Marvel) and the entire Avengers team become a target for a mysterious figure and the superpowered Wrecking Crew. Expect mayhem measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale and 8.8 on the cool-ometer. By Jerry Ordway and Al Gordon. "He actually has appeared in the distant past," teases Ordway about his mystery villain, "in a couple different Marvel books. It's like mining for gold, you know. You look through your comic collection and say, okay, [writer Kurt] Busiek has used every idea I'd like to use. But I found one that no one has mined yet." **$1.99**

AVENGERS FOREVER #6 (OF 12)

MARVEL To hell with Mick Jagger—time is definitely *not* on the Avengers' side. Back in the past, Avengers Hawkeye, Songbird and Yellowjacket find themselves being hunted; Wasp and Captain Marvel find themselves tripping through the ages, and future Avengers fall under attack from Immortus. Can you say "Avengers Dis-assemble"? By the time-tested team of Roger Stern, Kurt Busiek, Carlos Pacheco and Jesus Merino. **$2.99**

MR TITLES DENOTED WITH AN MR CONTAIN MATERIAL THAT'S SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS.

BATMAN BOOKS

DC COMICS Your mother complains about *your* room being messy, but if she saw Gotham City, she'd have a coronary. In *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight* #117, Batman attacks the Penguin's Iceberg Lounge while a gang war in Gotham produces a large number of widows. *Batman* #565 sees underworld scum the Black Mask (hey, what's he doing out of Astro City?) form his own cult and try to conquer Gotham, while the triple threat of Batman, Oracle and the new Batgirl take down the fiendish Black Mask cult in *Detective Comics* #732. Finally, the Dark Knight battles gladiator-style against a host of creeps to win a supply route leading outside of Gotham in *Batman: Shadow of the Bat* #85. By Ian Edginton and D'Israeli (*B:LotDK* and *B:SotB*), and Greg Rucka and Frank Teran (*Batman* and *Detective*). **$1.99 each**

BONE #37

CARTOON BOOKS Since we don't know our hip bone from our knee bone, we figured we'd let *Bone* creator Jeff Smith fill us in on this month's ish. "In the last few issues, we've seen the Hooded One and the rat creatures declare war against the valley, and Fone Bone struggle to keep the alliance together. Phoney Bone, along with Gran'ma Ben, Lucius and all the other valley folks, re-occupy the ancient stronghold of Old Man's Cave, where they are making their last stand against the rat creatures. Phoney's beginning to see the error of his greedy and scheming ways. When Phoney sneaks off to turn himself over to the rat creatures, everybody—and I mean *everybody*—is out looking for him, and they are all on a path from which there is no turning back." By Smith, who also promises this issue will unmask the nefarious Hooded One. **$2.95**

newreleases

FIRST TIME OUT

ALL-STAR COMICS **(DC Comics)** Dictators Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini beware! This month, DC is telling tales of 1940s heroes from the Justice Society of America. Catch old-time crimefighters from the JSA in their prime (the 1940s) with *All-Star Comics* #1. Then pick up *Adventure Comics* #1, *All-American Comics* #1, *National Comics* #1, *Smash Comics* #1, *Sensation Comics* #1, *Star Spangled Comics* #1 and *Thrilling Comics* #1, before wrapping up this "golden" event in *All Star Comics* #2. **$2.95–*All Star Comics*; $1.95–each**

ANARKY #1 **(DC Comics)** Want to save the world, Anarky? Don't call in the Justice League–they still think you're a crook. Do, however, steal Green Lantern's ring. **$2.50**

BATMAN: JOKER'S APPRENTICE **(DC Comics)** Very bad man Arthur Rankel gets some terror tips from very, very bad man the Joker, and is sent out to terrorize Batman. **$3.95**

BATMAN: NOSFERATU **(DC Comics)** In a bizarre Elseworlds, the dark hero Nosferatu makes like Sherlock Holmes to end a series of gruesome murders. **$5.95**

GEN13: GRUNGE SAVES THE WORLD! **(WildStorm/DC)** Himalayas-bound, Grunge tries to save Lynch and the rest of civilization! **$5.95**

GLORY #0 **(Awesome)** Heroine Glory discovers her place among the gods and learns her history. **$2.50**

JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA SUPER-SPECTACULAR #1 **(DC Comics)** Super-stories from the Justice League and Justice Society's past are dusted off and reprinted–including the JLA's very first battle against Starro. **$5.95**

LADY PENDRAGON #0 **(Image)** After yanking the sword from a big rock, Jennifer Drake blossomed into Lady Pendragon. Now read about her secret origin! **$2.50**

MAGNETO REX #1 **(Marvel)** With stars in his eyes, the demented Magneto plots to conquer the country of Genosha. **$2.50**

MUTANT X 1999 **(Marvel)** Raggedy do-gooders led by Havok strike the Goblin Queen, the Six and the Fantastic Four. Repeatedly. **$3.50**

NOVA #1 **(Marvel)** Hard-luck hero Nova evaluates his life and his standing with the superteam the New Warriors. **$2.99**

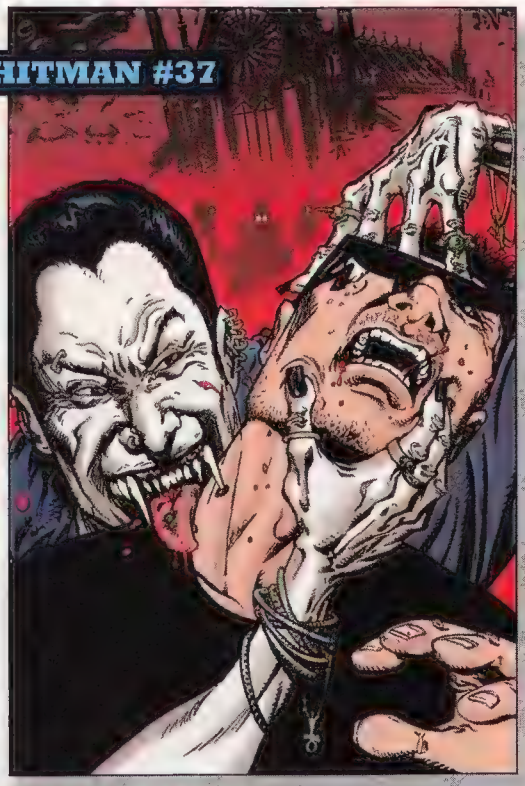
SPIDER-MAN: CHAPTER 1 #0 **(Marvel)** Find out what the Vulture, Lizard and Sandman did before there was a Spider-Man. **$2.50**

SUPERMAN/FANTASTIC FOUR **(DC Comics/Marvel)** Look, up in the sky! It's Superman and the Fantastic Four–and they're battling the cosmic poopie-head Galactus. **$9.95**

UNDERTAKER #1 **(Chaos!)** Pro-wrestler Undertaker finds Hell is very much to his liking. **$2.95**

WITCHBLADE INFINITY **(Top Cow Comics)** The Witchblade's a powerful weapon in the hands of cop Sara Pezzini. Learn how powerful the Witchblade would be if Pezzini never got to wear it. **$3.50**

YOUNG JUSTICE 80-PAGE GIANT #1 **(DC Comics)** A misguided genie sends the Young Justice super-kids sprawling across time and space. **$4.95**


HITMAN #37

DAREDEVIL #7

MARVEL "Guardian Devil," part 7 (of 8). Somebody's mucked with Daredevil's life big time. Worse, the Man Without Fear's been stuck with a baby who might save the world or be its destroyer. Finally, the villain behind the evil plot is revealed, but some creeps are best left in shadows...by Kevin Smith, Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti. **$2.50**

GREEN LANTERN #112

DC COMICS Home for Green Lantern Kyle Rayner is where Fatality is. Fatality likes puppies, candle-lit dinners, long walks on the beach and wasting ring-wearin' Green Lanterns. She puts Rayner and his GL girlfriend on the ropes, and only former Lantern John Stewart can turn the tide—if he makes a life-altering decision, that is. By Ron Marz, Ron Lim, Darryl Banks and Terry Austin. "John and Jade will have to get used to lifestyle changes," Marz says, heralding a new status quo for both heroes. "And not necessarily good ones." **$1.99**

HELLBLAZER #137

VERTIGO/DC "Haunted," part 4 (of 6). Grizzled magician John Constantine's been beaten like Pearl Jam's bass drum. Thinking Constantine's completely vulnerable, sorcerer Josh Wright (who's a few croutons short of a salad, if you catch our meaning) gathers some goons to maim Constantine. By Warren Ellis and John Higgins. **MR. $2.50**

HITMAN #37

DC COMICS Where's Blade or Buffy when you need 'em? Telepathic hitman Tommy Monaghan and his pal Natt the Hat sharpen their stakes and hunt for vampires who've kidnapped a small boy. By Garth Ennis, John McCrea and Garry Leach. **$2.50**

HUMAN TARGET #2 (OF 4)

VERTIGO/DC Human Target Christopher Chance, master of impersonation, becomes a human target himself when a female killer comes to claim a bounty on his head. Alanis Morissette, take notice—that's *real* irony for you! Target practice by Peter Milligan and Edvin Biukovic. **MR. $2.95**

INHUMANS #7 (OF 12)

MARVEL Human soldiers attack the city of Attilan and the Inhumans vote on whether to leave them alone or waste 'em like pieces of trailer park trash. And, if they vote to kill the humans, will Inhuman leader Black Bolt accept the decision? Rock the vote, baby. By Paul Jenkins and Jae Lee. **$2.99**

THE INVISIBLES (VOL. 3) #11

VERTIGO/DC "Satanstorm," part 2 (of 4). Transparent heroes the Invisibles do double duty searching for the vile Royal Monster and their pal Detective Flint. Elsewhere, Invisibles leader King Mob rolls down to India and presses the flesh with a cute new team member. Shagadelic, baby. By Grant Morrison and Philip Bond. **MR. $2.95**

IRON MAN #16

MARVEL Somebody's finally getting revenge on Seattle for that "grunge rock" craze. Dragon Lord gets his mojo (and anger) working and decides to stomp the city flat, but runs into hometown hero Iron Man. Old Iron Pants is back at full power, but is full power enough to fell this foe? Hmm...probably not. Plus, the Collectors return to either kill Iron Man or snatch up variant issues of *Danger Girl*. By Kurt Busiek, Roger Stern, Patrick Zircher and Larry Stucker. **$1.99**

JLA #29

DC COMICS "Crisis Times Five" part 2 (of 3). Magical imps have opened up a five-dimensional can of whup-ass, and now the JLA and Captain Marvel are stuck in the middle of a war between goons from the Fifth Dimension. One hero will have his brain taken over by a powerful imp, and an untested hero will have to knock him senseless. By Grant Morrison, Howard Porter and John Dell. **$1.99**

THE LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN #3 (OF 6)

WILDSTORM/DC Tonight, some of the greatest heroes from Victorian literature will party like it's 1899! Questing to find the mysterious "Cavorite," rugged adventurer Alan Quartermain and mad scientist Dr. Jekyll venture forth to meet the enigmatic figure named the Doctor. Meanwhile, Mina Harkness and her pal Griffin get information—and caffeine goodness—from Quong Lee, tea mogul. By Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neill. **$2.95**

PLANETARY #2

WILDSTORM/DC The members of Planetary must rescue a Japanese writer and his fans from an island that

Japan and Russia have been fighting over since World War II. Could it be there really are giant reptiles and intelligent insects on the island? Could it be you're so gullible you'd think we'd give away the secret? Nah. By Warren Ellis and John Cassaday. **$2.50**

PREACHER #49

VERTIGO/DC "First Contact." Hard-boiled Preacher Jesse Custer has a mind to find God, literally. But has Jesse's quest come to an end, or are the ghosts of the past weighing too heavily on his mind? One thing's for sure—this ain't no wimpy "Star Trek" film. By Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon. **MR. $2.50**

ROBIN #64

DC COMICS Get the hot water and sterile towels—Robin's teenage girlfriend is in labor! Normally, the Boy Wonder would love to be grossed out by the birthing procedure, but he's got to open a big can of stomp-ass on the hapless villains Captain Boomerang and the Riddler. And with Flash's help, there's gonna be a lot of stomping. By Chuck Dixon, Staz Johnson and Stan Woch. **$1.99**

SAVAGE DRAGON #59

IMAGE COMICS Guess who's coming to dinner? No, it's not George Lucas. It's the one, true Savage Dragon (woo hoo!), back from who knows where to dish out goodly amounts of justice. Find out where he's been and what he's been up to in this revelatory issue written, drawn and sealed with a kiss by Erik Larsen. **$2.50**

SLINGERS #6

MARVEL It's no lie, and that's the truth. The kids from the new superteam Slingers meet for an intimate, secret-spilling game of "Truth or Dare." (No, Madonna will *not*

alsoshipping

MORE BOOKS TO GET

CAPTAIN AMERICA BOOKS (Marvel) Charged with god-like power, the Red Skull threatens to destroy America in *Captain America* #17. After an assassination attempt on Captain America's life, the Falcon struggles to prevent a riot in Harlem in *Captain America: Sentinel of Liberty* #9. **$1.99 each**

THE CROW #2 (Todd McFarlane Productions/Image) The Crow tracks down his killers and force-feeds them their spleens. **$2.50**

THE DARKNESS #23 (Top Cow/Image) On death's door, Jackie Estacado seeks out an acquaintance from way back. **$2.50**

EARTH X #2 (Marvel) Learn about the final fate of the Fantastic Four and meet the circus performers known as...the X-Men? **$2.99**

FANTASTIC FOUR #17 (Marvel) Negative Zone heroes Lockdown and Rosetta Stone battle to keep Shadow City free from the tyranny of the Fantastic Four. **$1.99**

FATHOM #6 (Top Cow/Image) Killian and the Admiral hatch evil plots with the intent to exploit water-babe Aspen Matthews. **$2.50**

THE FLASH #148 (DC Comics) A multitude of Flashes from the present and future battle the terrible Thawne clan in the 30th century. **$1.99**

GAMBIT #4 (Marvel) Blade and Gambit head to New Orleans to investigate the genocide of the Thieves and Assassins Guilds. **$1.99**

SPAWN #84 (Todd McFarlane Productions/Image) A new cult springs up in New York City, three sisters hire two detectives to find Cogliostro, and Spawn's stuck in between. **$1.95**

SPIDER-MAN BOOKS (Marvel) Meet the new Spider-Woman in *Amazing Spider-Man* #5, and find out all about her and the other females in Peter Parker's life in *Peter Parker: Spider-Man* #5. The villain Mysterio makes merriment to Spider-Man's regret in *Spider-Man: Chapter 1* #7. **$1.99–each; $2.50–*Chapter 1***

STAR WARS BOOKS (Dark Horse) Fly the unfriendly spaceways with Sylvn and some teen fugitives in a ship loaded with killer alien beasties in *Star Wars* #4. Boba Fett finds trouble when he catches his prey–and Darth Vader and his mercenaries catch Fett in *Star Wars: Boba Fett–Enemy of the Empire* #3. Former Crimson Guardsman Kir Kanos tries to salvage a rescue mission gone awry in *Star Wars: Crimson Empire–Council of Blood* #5, and Rebel Alliance heroes make a beeline to flee Cloud City in *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back–Manga* #4. In *Star Wars: Vader's Quest* #2, Jal the drunken Rebel pilot is hunted by the Imperials who want to pick his brain about Luke Skywalker. **$2.95–each; $2.50–*Star Wars*; $9.95–*The Empire Strikes Back***

SUPERMAN BOOKS (DC Comics) Superman's given up being Clark Kent! He gains some insight into his new, ultra-driven personality in *Superman: The Man of Steel* #88, while his Fortress of Solitude becomes the Fortress of Wreckitude in *Superman* #144. In the rubble of Superman's Fortress, Supes makes a tough choice while a villain moves to take over the world in *Adventures of Superman* #567. Superman must save the world from the cosmic Dominus in *Action Comics* #754–but the Big S is stuck in the Phantom Zone. **$1.99 each**

WOLVERINE #138 (Marvel) Wolverine and the space-faring heroes the Starjammers flee a doomed prison planet and try to rescue thousands of hardened space felons from death. **$1.99**

be joining in.) They're going to determine their future as heroes, reveal their origins and maybe stick their tongues to freezing cold metal poles. By Joe Harris, Chriscross and Rob Stull. **$1.99**

STRANGERS IN PARADISE #22

ABSTRACT STUDIO Friends to the end Katchoo, Francine and David find the end is near. Francine's dating a married man, Katchoo is looking to move out of their shared apartment, and their clueless pal David is caught in between. By Terry Moore, who says, "Francine and Katchoo are having the fight of their lives because Katchoo has her first big art exhibition and all the paintings are of Francine—and Francine doesn't like that. But, in the middle of all this chaos, the fighting girls discover something wonderful about each other that they would not have known otherwise." **$2.75**

SUPERMAN ADVENTURES #31

DC COMICS Thrust one year into the future, the Man of Steel finds out that electric cars still aren't economically feasible, the common cold still hasn't been cured and Bill Gates is now King of the Known Universe. Oh yeah, and Superman has to defend the Earth against Superman. By Mark Millar, Aluir Amancio and Terry Austin. **$1.99**

THOR #11

MARVEL "War on Asgard," part 2 (of 3). Some friendly advice from the peace-lovin' folks at *Wizard*: grab the first boat off the Earth! It seems the evil Dark Gods are done with Asgard, and are now bent on attacking our fine planet. So where's the Mighty Thor? Well, he's kinda stuck in the puny human form of paramedic Jake Olson. Without his hammer, he's trapped and powerless. An unlikely ally awaits—but is Olson crazy enough to seek out his help? For humanity's sake, let's hope so! By Dan Jurgens, John Romita, Jr. and Klaus Janson. **$1.99**

THOR #11

on the edge

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

FRED THE POSSESSED FLOWER #4 Happy Predator Comics

People in the 1960s used to say "flower power!" This is because people in the 1960s were, generally, stupid as clams. Still, this moronic slogan takes on new meaning when the colorfully demonic and possessed plant Fred takes his act into court, defending his beloved home, Hell, against the Easter Bunny and other cheery figures. Which reminds us of a really good lawyer joke, one that we can't tell for fear of having the pants sued off of us. By some guy named Happy Nick. **$2.95**

THUNDERBOLTS #26

MARVEL Send cigarettes to former Master of Evil/current Thunderbolt Mach-1. He's stuck in the pokey (that's jail to you, son) doing hard time to atone for his sins with super-crooks such as the Rhino, Whirlwind and Boomerang, who want him dead like the dinosaurs. And to make matters worse, someone just started a jailbreak, leaving Mach-1 a little too vulnerable. By Kurt Busiek, Joe Casey, Mark Bagley, Leonardo Manco and Scott Hanna. **$1.99**

THE TITANS #3

DC COMICS It's the matinee of death for the newly reformed Titans! Terror straight from the silver screen plagues the team when movie icon Goth turns an evil eye toward Titan Donna Troy. Don't forget yer popcorn! By Devin Grayson, Josue Rivera, Justiano and Drew Johnson. **$2.50**

TRANSMETROPOLITAN #21

VERTIGO/DC "The New Scum" part 3 (of 6). Hail to the chief as grizzled journalist Spider Jerusalem sits down to grill the president of the United States in a one-on-one interview. You can bet old Spider won't be tossing the prez any softballs such as, "boxers or briefs?" By Warren Ellis, Darick Robertson and Rodney Ramos. **MR. $2.50**

UNCANNY X-MEN #368

MARVEL While the X-Men bury a teammate, Wolverine goes on one of his daily berserker rampages, trying to bring the malevolent Magneto to his no-good knees. Oh yeah, and in case you were wonderin', a huge threat looms in the distance. By Alan Davis and Adam Kubert. **$1.99**

WILDCATS #2

WILDSTORM/DC The voodoo that you do so well is nothing compared to exotic dancer Voodoo's hoodoo. This ex-Wildcat member confronts an alien medicine man with evil intentions, and recruits her former comrade Maul to help her eliminate the alien influences in her body. It's a wild ride by Scott Lobdell and Travis Charest. **$2.50**

X-MEN #88

MARVEL Things turn real wacky like when the X-Men are thrust into a strange dimension where socks are shoes, green is purple, bacon eats people and a mutant's powers are twisted and mutated (more than usual). So how are the X-Men gonna stop the souped-up, mountainous Juggernaut? Good question. By Alan Davis and Mark Farmer. **$1.99**

characterprofile

RAP SHEET

WITCHBLADE

FAMILY JEWELS: After losing one of three jewels on the Witchblade gauntlet, Sara found she could control the Witchblade more easily. The significance of the stones has yet to be revealed. (*Witchblade* #25)

BACK TO THE FUTURE: The Witchblade reveals to Sara past lives of its former wearers, like the cocky, brogue-slinging lady pirate who kicked butt in 1736. (*Witchblade* #9)

COP OUT: Sara Pezzini is a no-nonsense, NYC homicide detective following in her father's footsteps. She once leaped into a hail of gunfire to save her partner, but alas, he died anyway. (*Witchblade* #1)

SWISS ARMY KNIFE: The gauntlet can create all sorts of weapons such as energy bolts, a fiery energy blade and even vine-like tendrils.

RIPPED: When under attack, the Witchblade envelops Sara's body, usually ripping her clothes off in the process. Somehow, the Witchblade's tendrils always manage to cover her more...uh...sensitive areas.

LADIES FIRST: The Witchblade prefers symbiotic relationships with women. When Kenneth Irons tried it on, it burned his hand away. Ian Nottingham underwent grueling rituals before wearing the Witchblade, and still couldn't contain its power. (*Witchblade* #7)

SHE'S THE ONE: Sara must really be important, 'cuz the Witchblade has attached itself to her body against Sara's will and healed her fatal wounds not just once, but twice. (*Witchblade* #1, #3)

BODY GUARD: The Witchblade can create body armor around Sara, like the time it protected her at the center of a collapsing building. (*Witchblade* #25)

MENTAL CASE: The Witchblade can protect Sara even without her mental command, thus saving her from surprise attacks. (*Witchblade* #3)

ORIGIN

Police Detective Sara Pezzini's investigation of drug lords led her to the old abandoned Rialto Theater. There, mysterious financier Kenneth Irons was holding a contest to find the one person who could wield the Witchblade gauntlet, an ancient artifact of power. Irons was looking for a pawn he could control. But when Pezzini was discovered and wounded by Irons' henchmen, the Witchblade mysteriously attached itself to her body. Resistant at first, Sara eventually accepted her role as the latest in a long line of women to bond to the mysterious Witchblade.

NOW APPEARING

Besides exploring what might have happened if Sara didn't get the Witchblade in March's *What If?...*-style *Witchblade Infinity* one-shot, look for Sara to do a little exploring in the future. *Witchblade* co-writer David Wohl says this spring Sara will delve deeper into the origin of the Witchblade–and she may not like what she finds. "She begins to learn more about where the Witchblade is from and what its agenda really is," says Wohl. "She becomes at odds with it again." As for another crossover with *Tomb Raider*, don't expect one until the end of the year.

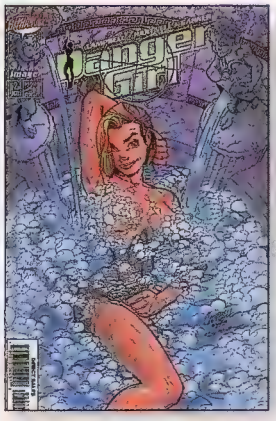
REPORT card

COMIC BOOK REVIEWS

BY *WIZARD* EDITORS BRIAN CUNNINGHAM, ANDREW KARDON AND MIKE SEARLE

DANGER GIRL

Shameless, gratuitous and a hoot to read



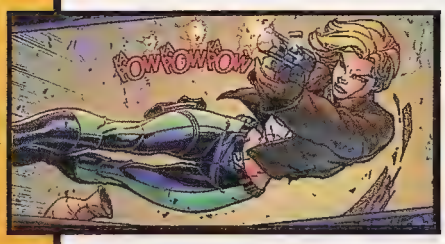
ISSUES REVIEWED: #1-#4
GENRE: Action/adventure
PUBLISHER: Cliffhanger/DC Comics
CREATIVE TEAM: J. Scott Campbell, Andy Hartnell and Alex Garner
PRICE/FREQUENCY: $2.50/uh...a few times a year.

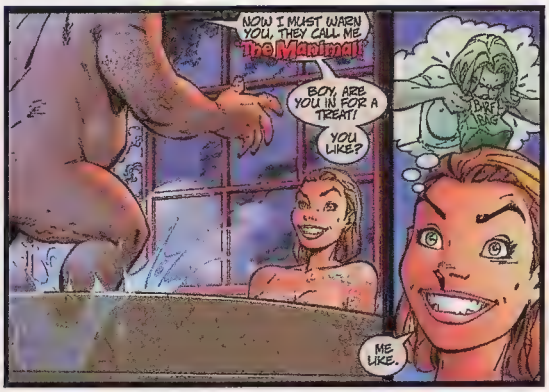
What You Need to Know: Think "James Bond meets 'Charlie's Angels.'" As sexy as they are dangerous, Abbey Chase, Natalia Kassle and Sydney Savage, along with computer whiz Silicon Valerie, make up the super-secret spy organization Danger Girl.

The Good: This book is fun, plain and simple. Yeah, there are a few—okay, a LOT—of excessive cheesecake shots, but they're so over the top, that the book's actually making fun of itself. In issue #1, Abbey puts on a really skimpy waitresses' uniform as a disguise, but she complains that it's too small. Another time (#2), Abbey's trying to steal an ancient shield from a smuggler's posh hotel room only to have him return while she's in there. What's she do? Why, take off all her clothes and jump in a bubble bath. Scenes like these are so ridiculous, you can't help but laugh at them.

The art is top-notch. Not only are the gals gorgeous, but the facial expressions are priceless, adding to the book's light tone. The fast-paced storytelling—particularly the car and boat chases—makes the book read like a non-stop action/adventure movie.

There are some cool little scenes in just about every issue. At a French café, a smuggler asks his dining partner to translate "*cevelle parmentiere*" (mashed brains) on a menu for him before unexpectedly blowing his brains out (#1). After Abbey falls from an enemy helicopter (#2) she taunts an attacker by twirling a grenade pin on her finger, resulting in her assailant's explosive demise. There are also some great cliffhangers in here such as Abbey exiting a tunnel straight into gunfire from two helicopters (#1) or a wounded Natalia trapped in a house plummeting over a cliff (#4).





The Bad: Yeah, it's a lot of fun (And who doesn't like to see lots of hot chicks?)—but we admit it, *Danger Girl* lacks substance. Beyond the fast-paced stories, there's really no meat to these tales, only opportunities to show scantily clad chicks with guns. A better balance between story development and satirical situations would make for a more satisfying read.

Danger Girl also doesn't deliver on any regular basis; it's notorious for shipping really late. The series debuted in March of 1998, and only four issues were published since then (as of press time in January 1999). There was even a six-month delay between #3 and #4.

The Buzz: *Danger Girl*'s lateness has a lot of fans seeing red. But with a new Danger Girl joining the team later this year, as well as toy and movie deals in the works, don't look for these Girls to slow down anytime soon (shipping schedule permitted, that is...).

The Skinny: Yeah, it's pure fluff. Yeah, there's half-nekkid chicks running around with guns. Yeah, it comes out once every 87 months. Yeah, we still dig it anyway. ■

Yeah, Danger Girl *is shameless T&A, but man, it can be funny!*

The movie-like action sequences really MOVE, as Abbey Chase can attest to here.

THE GRADE: B

SPIDER-MAN: CHAPTER ONE

If it ain't broken...

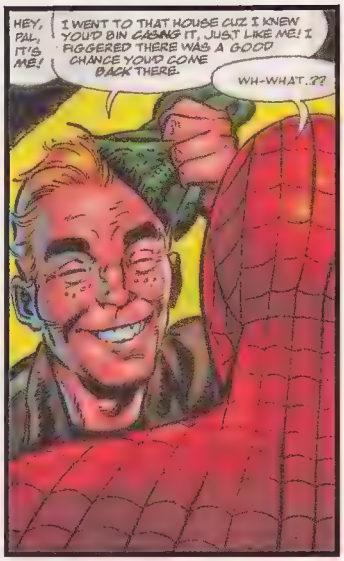
ISSUES REVIEWED: #1-#5
GENRE: Superhero action/adventure
PUBLISHER: Marvel Comics
CREATOR: John Byrne
PRICE/FREQUENCY: $2.50/Monthly

What You Need to Know: Bitten by a radioactive spider, Peter Parker gained the proportionate powers of a spider—super-strength and agility, the ability to stick to any surface and a sixth sense which warns of potential danger. Failing to stop a thief who would later kill his Uncle Ben, Peter vowed to never shirk his responsibilities and began fighting crime as the Amazing Spider-Man.

The Good: It's neat to see Spidey's familiar rogues gallery members in their original forms, back battling the Web-slinger every issue—the Vulture (#3), Dr. Octopus (#4), the Lizard (#5). Also, there are a lot of little details that make us feel like Spider-Man's adventures are taking place in the "real world," such as when J. Jonah Jameson almost recognizes Spidey's undisguised voice (#3), and when Peter, with his newfound powers realizes he doesn't need glasses anymore (#4).

The Bad: Everything in *Chapter One*, from the sequence of events to too many plot synopses to the dialogue, is forced and formulaic with no energy and drama. By trying to squeeze in all the old story points and over-explaining them to have them make "more sense," all we're left with is a dry, tepid retelling of a classic origin.

Where's the proof? In issue #1, the pivotal moment of Spider-Man's origin deflates when Spidey confronts the burglar who killed his uncle. Instead of Spidey's stark revelation that his uncle's death was his fault in the original version, *Chapter One*'s redo has the burglar painstakingly *explain* this realization to Spidey.



Several times throughout the first couple of issues, sequences are presented out of order to start the story off with a bang, but instead become awkward and confusing. For example, issue #5 opens with a Lizard splash page, even though Doctor Doom is the villain Spidey's fighting in the next 11 pages; it's just another example of forced storytelling to cram in too much information or make sure there's a separate villain per issue. Worst of all, the Spider-Man we know and love—the Spidey who's witty and always joking with the villains—is lost in dialogue trying to be hip, but that ends upstilted and overdone.

Throw in an uncharacteristic slow-witted Dr. Doom, sketchy artwork, stories way less interesting than the originals and you'll come to the same conclusion we did—there's no reason for this mini-series to exist.

The Buzz: Revamps like this might've wowed fans in the 1980s, but apparently no more. Despite steady sales, fans are less than enchanted with this '90s take on Peter Parker and his alter-ego.

The Skinny: As far as we're concerned, these stories didn't happen. Lacking the magic of the classic original Stan Lee/Steve Ditko Spider-Man stories, *Chapter One* might as well be a lengthy *What If...?* comic.

Instead of the gut-punch impact of the original origin, the burglar had to EXPLAIN things before Peter realized it was his fault his Uncle Ben was murdered.

For a series that's supposed to make Spidey hip and modern for the '90s, this dialogue is so painful, it hurts to read it.

THE GRADE: D

CAPTAIN AMERICA: SENTINEL OF LIBERTY

Red, white and new

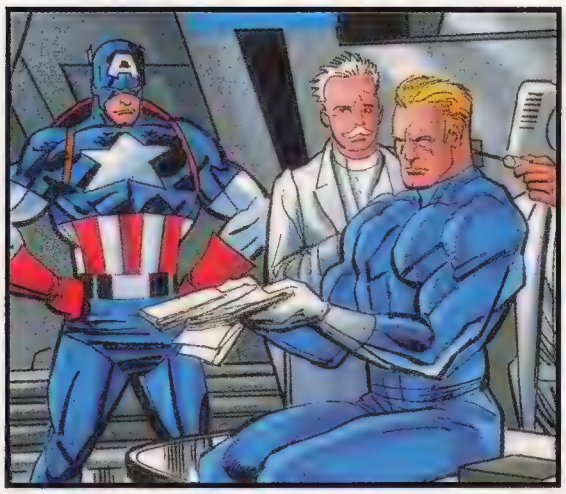
ISSUES REVIEWED: #1-#6
GENRE: Superhero action/adventure
PUBLISHER: Marvel Comics
CREATIVE TEAM: Mark Waid, Ron Garney, Dougie Braithwaite and various inkers
PRICE/FREQUENCY: $1.99/Monthly

What You Need to Know: During World War II, Steve Rogers was injected with a super-soldier serum to defend his country as Captain America. Armed with an indestructible shield and an Olympic-class physique, Captain America helped the United States win the war, only to be accidentally frozen in a block of ice and thawed many years later at the hands of his newfound allies, the Avengers. *Sentinel of Liberty* tells stories about Cap from all different time periods—past, present and future.

The Good: The story set-ups are top-notch. In issue #1, Cap battles a S.H.I.E.L.D. traitor with a photographic memory and is forced to make a critical decision—let a man escape who can recite the nation's launch codes verbatim or kill him in cold blood. Issue #2 has an insane Human Torch attacking Atlantis, only to have a young Cap and his fellow Invader teammate Namor discover Atlantis has been secretly taken over by the Nazis. Finally, issue #5 sees Cap adjusting to his revival in a modern world and interacting with an Iron Man who feels badly for Cap because of his seemingly average fighting skills.

A great job's also done with the young, inexperienced Cap's characterization. We watch him learn the hard way how to deal with the tension between Namor and the Torch, struggle with him through unfamiliar battle situations like trying to fight underwater and see him get chewed out by his superior officer for letting the Torch fall into enemy hands (all in #2). Instead of the rock-solid consummate team leader, we see a refreshing, more human side of Rogers.

The Bad: The endings don't deliver on the set-ups. A squadron of renegade Human Torch androids heading towards the American coast is great suspense, but not when the climax is "tricking" the Torches into an underwater vessel and launching missiles at it (#4). In issue #6, Iron Man falls victim to some killer robots' hypnotic mind control, but Cap saves the day because his willpower is strong enough to resist the robots. Ugh.



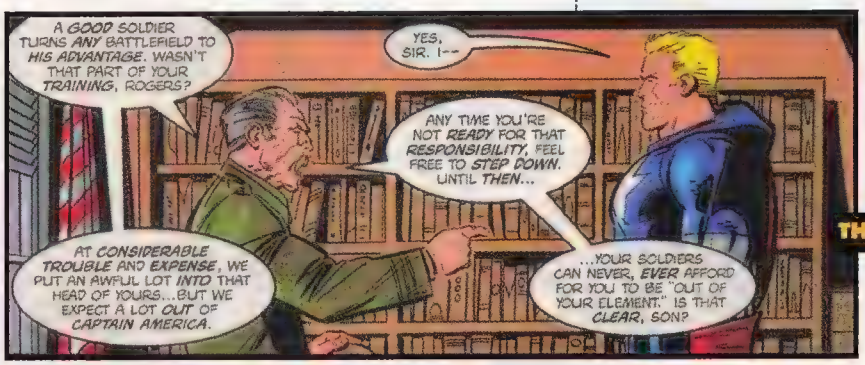
Sometimes-confusing panel layout and unpolished artwork don't help matters either. In issue #6's second story, the battle between Cap and the Chameleon is a bit muddled, racing from room to room, culminating in a confusing scene which has Cap leap off his ricocheting shield to catch an airborne helicopter. Uh, okay...

The Buzz: Since its debut last summer, the title's been losing steam. We guess one Cap book is enough, in fans' eyes.

The Skinny: Interesting plots and clever ideas carry this series, but unfortunately the same impact isn't imparted on the climaxes.

As good as the story set-ups are, the conclusions usually disappoint. Here, Cap personally oversees Nazi scientists "fixing" their tampering of the Human Torch.

This series humanizes a rookie Cap. You don't see him getting chewed out by a superior officer these days, like you do here.



THE GRADE: B-

DV8
B-O-R-I-N-G

ISSUES REVIEWED: #19–#25
GENRE: Superhero action/adventure
PUBLISHER: WildStorm/DC Comics
CREATIVE TEAM: Mike Heisler, Al Rio and Trevor Scott
PRICE/FREQUENCY: $2.50/Monthly

What You Need to Know: As agents of the shadowy group International Operations (I.O.), the Deviants (team leader Frostbite, Bliss, Evo, Sublime, Copycat, Powerhaus and Freestyle) are a group of super-powered kids just following orders and trying to have a good time.

The Good: There are a few interesting uses of superhuman powers in this series. The villain Arthrax (#21) emits an exclusive chemical so addictive that exposure to it is addictive; you'll suffer painfully and die if you don't have it. Then there's Powerhaus' powers which feed off of emotions. He saved himself, Freestyle and Bliss from drowning in the sea (#20) by feeding off their fears and using those emotions to pump up his body.

The Bad: Yawn. This series is a real snoozer. The stories take forever to get anywhere. While flying to one of its missions (#19), the team was suddenly attacked by super-modified enemy copters. With practically seconds to save themselves, what do the team members do? Why, they spend almost four pages deciding and explaining how they'll get out of this one. Or in issue #24, when the gang finally goes out for some fun at a nightclub, a ridiculous story gets even weirder by becoming a reality-warping crossover with *Gen13*. And when the stories finally crawl to the end, everything's wrapped up quickly and neatly.

These characters are so unlikable. Besides having little characterization, the Deviants don't even get along; they spend most of the time screaming at each other. And with characters like these, there's absolutely zero drama. Frostbite may die? Yeah he might, though probably not. And if he does, there's absolutely no emotional attachment to his character, so who cares?

Beyond the main storylines, there's no depth or subplots anywhere to be found. Heck, even potential subplots are blown into full stories. Issue #22's tale of Copycat's attempted escape from a detention area would have been tremendously more effective if the story had been spread out as a background subplot in other issues. Instead, we're given 22 pages on one character who we've hardly seen, and who after this issue, we barely see attention given to her again. Then #23 does the same exact thing with Threshold, as he awakens from a near-death beating and spends the entire issue getting better.

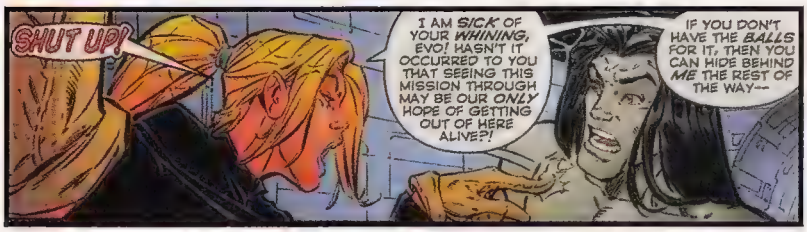
Then there's the dialogue which is full of curse words seemingly just for shock value. The only thing shocking is how absolutely boring these characters and their language is.

The Buzz: Since creators Warren Ellis and Humberto Ramos left *DV8*, this series has dropped out of the Top 100.

The Skinny: We've found the cure for insomnia! With depthless stories and characters whose names we can't even remember, *DV8* is a book in need of some life.

The addictive powers of the villain Arthrax are neat, but that's about the only thing going for this run of DV8.

DV8*'s characters are so unlikable, even THEY can't stand each other.*



THE GRADE: D

GAINING 'STEAM'

Viz's 'Steam Detectives' owes much to Batman and some to Inspector Gadget

Viz Comics is cooking with *Steam Detectives.*

Mighty metal monstrosities, powered by steam, stride across the gothic skyline while masked criminal masterminds plot dastardly deeds. Masked villains rain terror down on a helpless city from zeppelin fortresses while beautiful girls hang from fiendish deathtraps. It's Kia Asamiya's Steam City, a retro-Victorian metropolis swathed eternally in a thick fog—a fog that hides a thousand sins.

Naturally, there's only one man who stands between the evils of the night and the citizens of Steam City. Or rather, one boy: he's detective Narutaki, an orphan whose wealthy parents were cut down before his eyes in a lonely alley by a villain known as the Phantom Knight. Aided by his gadget-building butler Kawakubo and the inherited wealth of his father, young Narutaki has dedicated his life to fighting crime in Steam City. In the course of his duties, Narutaki takes on rogue robots, mad scientists, caped dark knights and, naturally enough, a *femme fatale* or two.

If Narutaki's origins sound, well, scandalously familiar, it's probably because Asamiya freely draws inspiration from a wide variety of sources, and not only Batman. Many, such as *Tetsujin 28*, are Japanese in origin, but he tosses in a healthy dose of Western references as well. In addition to the Phantom Knight homage to Batman, there's a nod to Marvel Comics' Doctor Doom in the form of the tech-fetishist Machine Baron. And if Inspector Yagami bears a strong resemblance to cartoon detective Inspector Gadget, it's probably not a coincidence—Asamiya was on the original "Inspector Gadget" animation team back in the '80s.

The lovely and talented nurse Ling Ling Hsu plays Dr. Watson to Narutaki's Sherlock Holmes. Originally a *femme fatale* doing the bidding of the Phantom Knight, she has since joined Narutaki as a partner, bringing along her loyal robot Goriki.

FULL STEAM AHEAD With guns a'plenty, detective Narutaki and his assisstant Ling Ling Hsu battle to keep Steam City safe.

Narutaki's foes chew the scenery with vigor. His archnemesis, the son of the original Phantom Knight, is given to pompous speeches and outrageous deathtraps. The Machine Baron is an iron-masked fellow who steals unique gadgets with his army of steam-powered automatons. The handsome Le Bread seeks to slay Narutaki, while his beautiful but twisted nurse sidekick Lang Lang merely desires to have Narutaki stuffed and hung in her parlor as her favorite boy toy. Dr. Guilty the mad scientist devotes much

BY PAUL SUDLOW

of his time unleashing his shadow-bolt robots on an unsuspecting city.

Asamiya is enthralled by mysterious pasts—nearly every character, from Narutaki to the robot Goriki, has great secrets. Narutaki has not yet revealed his true name, Ling Ling has a long lost sister (though it isn't too tough figuring out who she is), and several of °Narutaki's foes have links to the hero's past which are not revealed in their debut encounter.

Steam Detectives' bold, black and white retro-illustrations mark a departure from Asamiya's previous style, as seen in manga books *Silent Möbius* and *Nadesico*, which features detailed lines and rich textures. According to Asamiya, he altered his style both to make it more appealing to a younger age group and to make the characters easier to animate (from the very beginning, *Steam Detectives* was meant to be both a manga and anime).

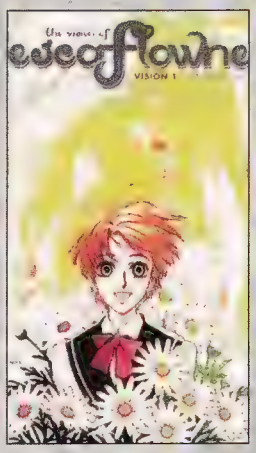
Wizard Entertainment editor Paul Sudlow once had a master plan to conquer the tiny hamlet of Honesdale, Pa., with an army of steam-powered robot men, but ran out of coal.

ANIMEPICK

ANIME FILM OF THE MONTH

The Vision of Escaflowne: Vision 1

(AnimeVillage.com, 98 minutes, $9.99, subtitled)



Hitomi Kansaki is a typical Japanese schoolgirl with a gift for fortune telling. Fortune soon comes calling when a mystical gem sweeps her to another world where knights battle in giant steam-powered robots and fire-breathing dragons haunt the skies. Befriended by the young Prince Van Fanel and the dashing knight Allen Schezar, Hitomi is drawn into a war between a massive empire and the small peripheral kingdoms, where her mystical skills will shift the tides of victory and defeat.

Vision of Escaflowne is a sweeping saga of romantic adventure, greatly enhanced by fantastic mecha designs, lush animation, a fantastic orchestral score by Yoko Kanno (*Macross Plus*) and endearing characters. This 26-episode series was two years in the making, and every minute shows on the screen.

Escaflowne is only available at www.anime village.com; the first tape—containing the first four episodes—is a steal at $9.99. The remaining seven tapes go for $24.99. ■ PS

MANGAPICKS

MUST-READ JAPANESE COMICS SHIPPING IN MARCH

Mobile Suit Gundam 0079 #1

VIZ COMICS

The *Gundam* saga has been huge in Japan since, oh, forever, and bit by bit companies like Bandai, Mixx and Viz are bringing the tales of the big red, white and blue robot to our shores. *Gundam 0079* is a manga retelling of the original story of young Amuro Rey and his father's Gundam mecha, which Amuro pilots in the great civil war between Earth and her Zeon orbital colonies. With its cylindrical colonies, complicated story arcs and sweeping tale of human evolution, *Gundam 0079* is very much a forerunner of "Babylon 5." Art by Kazuhisa Kondo. **$2.95**

Black Jack: Two-Fisted Surgeon Vol 2 Graphic Novel

VIZ COMMUNICATIONS

Dr. Osamu Tezuka ("Astroboy," "Kimba the White Lion") was a giant in the anime/manga industry: his was the first black-and-white anime, the first color anime, the first girls' manga. His manga have not been imported in great quantites, so *Black Jack* is a great chance to sample the works of Japan's national treasure. The title character is a scarred, mysterious figure who takes on the medical cases nobody else will touch. His adventures take him all over the world, from Japan and Africa to the Australian outback. **$15.95**

Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back #4

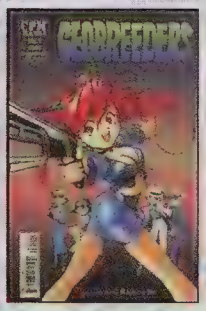
DARK HORSE

In these final days of the 15-year wait between Star Wars movies, slake your ever-growing prequel fever with the climactic final book of the hugely popular *Empire Strikes Back* manga adaptation. Han's a carbonite popsicle, Leia and the gang are racing through the halls of Cloud City and Luke's getting a little dueling lesson from the ultimate deadbeat dad. **$13.95**

Geobreeders #1

CENTRAL PARK MEDIA

Well, if it's from CPM, it must have cute girls in it. Surprise, surprise, *Geobreeders* has five of 'em, all members of the Kagura Security Company, a paranormal firm which investigates cases of the bizarre.



Yuka Kikushima is the hothead prez of Kagura, and she's just hired the firm's first male employee. He's picked a great time to start, because an evil poltergeist with a bone to pick with Yuka has invaded the offices looking for blood! For *Geobreeders*, creator Ahihiro piles on all the cute girls, big guns and magic charms he can think of. **$2.95** ■ PS

COMIC MARKET NEWS AND SUCH by Lars Pearson

MARKET WATCH

'BUFFY' STABS AT COMICS READERS

TV spin-off stakes comic book claim

There's new blood pumping the comics market these days. Even though it's only five issues old, *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* is a red-hot hit. The formula: teensy supply multiplied by feverish demand brought in by fans of the "Buffy" TV show, many of whom are not regular comics readers.

The obvious item stabbing readers' wallets today is *Dark Horse Presents Annual 1998*, Buffy's first comic appearance. This super-low-printed beachhead is now making hearts beat at $13 a pop. Looking for something cheaper, but in the same neighborhood? Grab a copy of *Dark Horse Presents* #141, hitting in March. It's an all-Buffy issue that will likely come in with a print run substantially lower than what the ongoing *Buffy* generates.

And while we're tipping you off, let's untangle the mental knot tied by cover variants. Remember first that every issue of *Buffy* starts with two covers: a direct-market comic art cover and a newsstand photo cover. Beyond that, available variants include:

- ***BUFFY* #1 GOLD-FOIL COVER:** A Dark Horse-produced variant with (duh) a gold-foil logo. It accounted for 20 percent of #1's print run.

- ***BUFFY* #1 ANOTHER UNIVERSE COVER:** A different photo cover than #1, this displays the AU logo. It's limited to 20,000 copies.

- ***BUFFY* #2 "BLOODCHROME" EDITION:** Another variant by Dynamic Forces, this features a wraparound, shiny, red cover. A mere 5,000 copies were made.

And beware if you see old *Buffy* issues with new photo covers, because they might be second printings—such was the case with a second-print *Buffy* #1. When in doubt, check the fine-print indicia usually found on the first page. That is, if you're not too busy hogging the set when "Buffy" is on.

TRADING UP Dark Horse's "Star Wars" trade paperbacks do well, too. Here are the three top sellers, combining both comic store and bookstore sales.

(Source: Dark Horse Comics; numbers represent a monthly average.)

BUFF AND TUFF So what if Buffy has a weird schnozzola? Her TV audience is buyin' her comic books anyway.

"STAR WARS" GAINS FORCE

Gentlemen, start your lightsabers!

We're living in a world where the trailer—*just the trailer!*—to the "Star Wars" prequel movie, due out in May, boosted movie receipts the first weekend it showed. Any wonder why *Star Wars* comics are seeing new interest?

Only two players exist here: Marvel—the company that published the original *Star Wars* comics—and Dark Horse, the current license holder. Old Marvel issues have core characters (such as Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader), unavailable to Dark Horse except in special situations, on their side. But the 'Horse has countered by employing influential "Star Wars" writers such as Timothy Zahn (scribe of the groundbreaking "Heir to the Empire" book trilogy) and novelist Kevin J. Anderson.

As "prequel mania" heats up, interest in back issues from both publishers is rising. Among an asteroid belt of product, here are some gems to look for:

• ***STAR WARS* #1, #68, #107 (MARVEL)**—The coveted *Star Wars* #1 and low-printed final issue #107 are obvious choices. But don't neglect #68, the origin of the cold-hearted bounty hunter, Boba Fett. Speaking of whom...

• ***BOBA FETT* ONE-SHOTS (DARK HORSE)**—Slap his name on the cover and it sells. Day or night, summer or winter, Empire or Rebel, *Boba Fett* remains an evergreen seller. The character is too cold, too calculating and too mysterious not to be liked by comics fans. And speaking of mystery...

• ***STAR WARS: CRIMSON EMPIRE I AND II* (DARK HORSE)**—The Emperor's crimson-colored Royal Guard stand out for the same reason as Boba Fett: They're damn mysterious. The 'Guard was seen only in "Return of the Jedi," and not heard from or given a background. *Crimson Empire* delivers their story, and reprints in the *Crimson Empire* paperback haven't slowed frantic back-issue sales.

• ***STAR WARS: SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE* (DARK HORSE)**—A Star Wars fan's dream, this series chronicles events between the "Empire" and "Jedi" movies, and showcases bounty hunters such as Boba Fett and Bossk.

PHOTOS: BUSIEK, KELLY, SMITH, ADAM KUBERT, MADUREIRA, MARZ, ROSS, TURNER, WAID, QUESADA, LARSEN, JIM LEE, Z. BY PAUL SCHERALDI; MORRISON BY BOB MARTIN; PÉREZ BY BOB SMITH; JURGENS, JIM LEE BY WIZARD; RAMOS AND CAMPBELL BY JOHN W. MCDONOUGH

TOP 10 CREATORS

FAN FAVORITES

These are the creators the fans crave. Creators whose name on a cover sells the book. *Wizard's* Top Ten Creators lists are derived from a nationwide retailer survey. Artists include pencilers and painters.

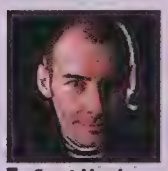
WRITERS

1. Kevin Smith
Clerks, Daredevil

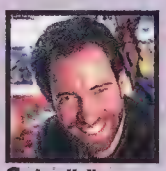
2. Kurt Busiek
Avengers, Thunderbolts

3. Mark Waid
Captain America, Flash

4. Garth Ennis
Preacher, Hitman



5. Grant Morrison
JLA, The Invisibles



6. Joe Kelly
Deadpool

7. Dan Jurgens
Thor, Superman

8. Erik Larsen
Wolverine, Savage Dragon

9. Christina Z.
Witchblade

10. Ron Marz
Green Lantern

ARTISTS

1. Michael Turner
Fathom

2. Alex Ross
Earth X

3. Joe Madureira
Battle Chasers

4. J. Scott Campbell
Danger Girl

5. Adam Kubert
Uncanny X-Men

6. George Pérez
Avengers

7. Joe Quesada
Daredevil, Ash

8. Jim Lee
Divine Right

9. Humberto Ramos
Crimson

10. Jae Lee
Inhumans

BURIED TREASURE

KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR THIS

BATMAN: SHADOW OF THE BAT #83

Batgirl's kicking ass in Gotham City! But...isn't Batgirl paralyzed?

Meet the *new* Batgirl, who debuted in January's *Batman: Shadow of the Bat* #83. Sure, a prior cameo appearance in the *No Man's Land* one-shot showed Batgirl's hand, but would you buy a comic just for a hand? The new Batgirl's identity is a mystery, but two things are known: She'll be a major player in Gotham all year long, and Batman Group Editor Dennis O'Neil has hinted that new Bat-titles will spring up in 2000. This new girl's looking primed and ready for her own series. Put your chips on this square while it's still cover price. ■ LP

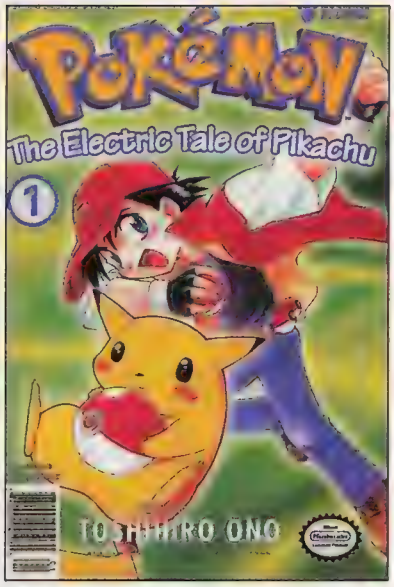
There's potential for price jumps, since Lucasfilm itself anointed this series as part of official Star Wars "continuity," even though there was no movie release attached.

FUTURE VIZ-ION

Most superhero readers may ignore it, but the American manga market is slowly growing to Godzilla-like proportions. And one publisher is reaping the whirlwind: Viz Communications.

In case you haven't noticed, Viz typically rings in as comics' fifth- or sixth-biggest publisher in sales in any given month—not bad for a company that publishes *nothing but* manga.

While Dark Horse's manga lineup is nothing to sneeze at, Viz has the top licensed manga properties, including *Ranma 1/2* and *Dragon Ball Z*. Viz's power also includes the female vote—women compose an almost unheard of 50 percent of the readership!—and relentless cross-marketing. When not stuffing 5,000 mini-comics into Pioneer Entertainment's manga videos, Viz busily sends the same number of comics to kids clubs at TV stations airing the "Pokémon" cartoon. The cross-pollination pays off in recognition and sales.



MANGA MANIA Viz Communications is moving up

Speaking of "Pokémon," the red-hot story of cute li'l Pikachu and more than 150 other fantastical fighting creatures, do not pass up *Pokémon: The Electric Tale of Pikachu*. Issue #1 of this new mini-series set a sales record for Viz, and *still* sold out so fast that a second printing was cranked out almost immediately. With Pokémon on its way to becoming a national craze, even multiple printings might not matter as collectors fight each other to get first printings. The "Pokémon" TV show already airs in 90 percent of U.S. markets, and is gaining that last 10 percent fast. That's not bad exposure for a blobby critter whose only line is "Pikachu!"

Wizard Price Guide Manager Lars Pearson will also say "Pikachu!" But only when you touch him in the right spot.

RETAILER NETWORK & V.I.P.s

RELIABLE SOURCES

Bruno Andreacchi
B.A.'s Comics & Nostalgia
121 Oxford St. East London
Ontario, Canada NGA 1T4
(519) 439-9636

Chris Barchuk
Wizard World
Rockland Center
51 E. Rt. 59
Nanuet, NY 10954
(914) 624-2224

Dave Braunstein
Eldorado Comics
2110 E. Rt. 70
Cherry Hill, NJ 08034
(609) 489-1199

Rich Conley
Heroes & Fantasies
914 Pat Brooker Road
Universal City, TX 78148
(210) 945-9884

D. Roberts & J. Walker
Legends Comics
Kentucky Oaks Mall
5101 Hinkleville Rd.
Paducah, KY 42001
(612) 822-2806

Dash Hobbeheydar &
Mark Laskowski
And Then it Rained Comics
P.O. Box 11041
Scottsdale, AZ 85271
(602) 990-9224

Steve Huber
Galaxy Comics
10 North 36th Street
Richmond, IN 47374
(765) 962-8239

Brian Kozicki & John Cathell
Buried Under Comics
188 West Middle Turnpike
Manchester, CT 06040
(860) 643-7295

Ivan Matos
Comic Connection
2128-C Fort Campbell Blvd.
Clarksville, TN 37042
(615) 572-9588

Ron McClure
American Comics and Cards
6787 Lee Highway
Chattanooga, TN 37421
(423) 490-0501

Avrom Oliver
Adventures in Comics & Games
6026 Fair Oaks Blvd.
Carmichael, CA 95608
(916) 973-9064

Jerry Ringi
Amazing Fantasy
4300 Portsmouth Blvd.
Suite 192
Chesapeake, VA 23321
(757) 465-8390

Tom Shea
TJ Collectibles
160 Main St.
Milford, MA 01757
(508) 473-5874

Steve Snyder
Central City Comics
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Columbus, OH 43220
(614) 459-5045

Joel Thingvall
Nostalgia Zone
3149 1/2 Hennepin Ave. S.
Minneapolis, MN 55406
(612) 822-2806

Doug Miers
Comics Conspiracy
115 A. East Fremont Ave.
Sunnyville, CA 94087
(408) 245-6275

Stuart Wagner
Caveman
1344 E. Battlefield
Springfield, MO 65804
(417) 882-2283

Robert Scott
Comickaze Comics
& Sportscards
5615 Balboa Ave.
San Diego, CA 92111
(619) 278-0371

Nolan Wyatt
Golden Apple Comics
7711 Melrose
Los Angeles, CA 90046
(213) 658-6047

Todd McDevitt
New Dimension Comics
Units 20-21
20550 Rte. 19
Cranberry Township, PA
16066-7520
(412) 776-0433

Phil Davis
B & D Comic Shop
802 Elm St. South West
Roanoke, VA 24016
(703) 342-6642

Damon McCulloch
Comics & Comix
6135 Sunrise Blvd.
Citrus Heights, CA 95610
(916) 969-0717

Robert Letscher II
Key Comics
PO Box 3855
Scottsdale, AZ 85271-3855
(602) 949-8499

John Chrusckinski &
Bruce Ellsworth
Tropic Comics
313 S. State Rd. #7
Plantation, FL 33317

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21280 Ft. Campbell Blvd.
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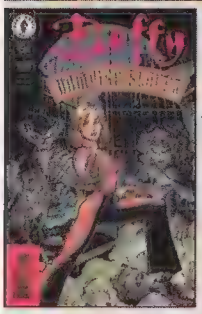
TOP 10 comics

***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the country's hottest back issues. These are the books ringing the registers this month...**

1 BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER #1



WRITER: Andi Watson
ARTISTS: Joe Bennett and Rick Ketcham

The guy next door watches TV, right? But we'll bet he *doesn't* read comics. Or maybe he does now. See, when a nation of couch potatoes gets thrown a show combining vampires with high-school girls in tight sweaters, you can bet Mr. Left Arm, the show will be a hit.. Then when they do a comic based on the show, Middle America shows up demanding a copy. Result: *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* #1 is the hottest back-issue comic on the market. **LAST MONTH: 3**

2 WHAT IF...? (VOL. 2) #105

WRITERS: Tom DeFalco and Ron Frenz
ARTISTS: Ron Frenz and Bill Sienkiewicz

Geez, we warned ya in "Buried Treasure" back in *Wizard* #86. We said *What If...?* #105 was gonna be the cornerstone of Marvel's MC2 Universe. Just six months ago, ya coulda latched on to this baby for, like, two bucks. Now, MC2 is clicking and it's goin' for $12, even though it's been reprinted! Just goes ta show ya–you should read carefully and pay attention. There's gonna be a quiz later. **LAST MONTH: NOT RATED (N.R.)**

3 DAREDEVIL #1

WRITER: Kevin Smith
ARTISTS: Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti

Kevin Smith writes *Daredevil*. You love Kevin Smith. To you, he's like the Easter Bunny, Santa Claus and your grandparents who give you a quarter for every "B" on your report card, all rolled up into one. You love Kevin Smith. Therefore, you love this comic. **LAST MONTH: 1**

4 INHUMANS #1

WRITER: Paul Jenkins
ARTIST: Jae Lee

Inhumans, in a word, is cool. It's an insanely deep, psychological take on Marvel's Inhuman Royal Family, with art so stunning, it'll make yer eyes bleed. But most importantly, it's cool. Cooler than frozen alligators in the shade. Cooler than an icebox in Alaska. Just plain cool. Dig it. **LAST MONTH: 2**

5 JAY AND SILENT BOB #1

WRITER: Kevin Smith
ARTIST: Duncan Fegredo

Jay is a loudmouth. But his slacker friend Silent Bob is indeed silent. And this marks the first time a silent-character comic has done this well. Yep, that old *Adventures of Mime-Man* series never quite took off. But *Jay and Silent Bob* has. And did we mention it's written by Kevin Smith? **LAST MONTH: 4**

6 CRIMSON #1

WRITER: Brian Augustyn
ARTISTS: Humberto Ramos and Sandra Hope

Fans want to love the Cliffhanger line. They *really* want to love it. But *Crimson* is the only Cliffhanger book of the three that comes out on any sort of regular basis. The rest o' the Cliffhanger gang is as reliable as the Italian post office. But *Crimson* is like a Timex watch–it keeps on tickin'. **LAST MONTH: 9**

7 POKÉMON: THE ELECTRIC TALE OF PIKACHU #1

WRITER: Toshihiro Ono
ARTIST: Toshihiro Ono

"Pokémon" is today's hottest cartoon. Pichaku is the cutest li'l electric mouse fighting creature since...the last mouse fighting creature. *Pokémon: The Electric Tale of Pikachu* is one tiny part of the biggest marketing blitz since *Windows '95*. Aha! Sucked in again! **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

8 DARKMINDS #1

WRITERS: Pat Lee and Adrian Tsang
ARTISTS: Pat Lee, Alvin Lee and Alan Tam

Pat Lee mania is running wild! The funky manga-meets-sci-fi comic *Darkminds* is a huge hit, and Lee has parlayed that success into a *Wolverine/Punisher* Marvel Knights gig and a *Darkminds* sequel. Up next is a Pat Lee Beanie Baby and a guest shot on the "Pokémon" cartoon. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

9 TOMB RAIDER/ WITCHBLADE #1

WRITER: Michael Turner
ARTISTS: Michael Turner and Joe Weems V

Remember the first *Tomb Raider/Witchblade* crossover from 1997? Probably not, because the comic was only available through strange and arcane methodology such as "mail order" and the ever-scary "Internet ordering." Ooooh! Spooky! **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

10 KISS: THE PSYCHO CIRCUS #1

WRITER: Brian Holguin
ARTISTS: Angel Medina and Kevin Conrad

The last circus we went to had elephants, cotton candy and funny clowns. But today's kids demand more out of their entertainment. So *KISS: The Psycho Circus* has chainsaw-wielding maniacs, cross-dressing freak shows and a 49-year-old bassist with a 9-inch tongue. Geez, do the times change or what? **LAST MONTH: 10**

THE HIGHEST-ORDERED BOOKS FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY

TOP 100

Compiled by the *Wizard* Price Guide staff, and working off data supplied by Diamond Comic Distributors.

Uncanny X-Men #366 led the way as "Magneto War" books scored the month's top slots

1. Uncanny X-Men #366 (Marvel)
2. X-Men #86 (Marvel)
3. X-Men: The Magneto War (Marvel)
4. Spawn #82 (Todd McFarlane/Image)
5. Earth X #0 (Marvel)
6. Avengers #14 (Marvel)
7. Wolverine #136 (Marvel)
8. Fathom #5 (Top Cow/Image)
9. JLA #27 (DC)
10. Gambit #2 (Marvel)
11. Amazing Spider-Man #3 (Marvel)
12. Daredevil #5 (Marvel)
13. Wildcats #1 (WildStorm/DC)
14. Peter Parker: Spider-Man #3 (Marvel)
15. Fantastic Four #15 (Marvel)
16. Captain America #15 (Marvel)
17. Avengers Forever #4 (Marvel)
18. Iron Man #14 (Marvel)
19. Thor #9 (Marvel)
20. Mutant X #6 (Marvel)
21. Spider-Man: Chapter One #5 (Marvel)
22. Witchblade #29 (Top Cow/Image)
23. Titans #1 (DC)
24. The Darkness #21 (Top Cow/Image)
25. Crimson #8 (WildStorm/DC)
26. Aria #2 (Avalon/Image)
27. Batman: No Man's Land (Collector's Edition) (DC)
28. Generation X #49 (Marvel)
29. X-Force #88 (Marvel)
30. X-Men Unlimited #22 (Marvel)
31. Green Lantern #110 (DC)
32. Inhumans #5 (Marvel)
33. Buffy the Vampire Slayer: The Origin (Dark Horse)
34. Curse of the Spawn #29 (Todd McFarlane/Image)
35. Spider-Girl #6 (Marvel)
36. X-Man #49 (Marvel)
37. Buffy the Vampire Slayer #5 (Dark Horse)
38. Batman #563 (DC)
39. Divine Right #9 (WildStorm/DC)
40. Thor 1999 (Marvel)
41. Webspinners: Tales of Spider-Man #3 (Marvel)
42. Cable #65 (Marvel)
43. Astro City #16 (WildStorm/DC)
44. Detective Comics #730 (DC)
45. Black Panther #5 (Marvel)
46. Nightwing #29 (DC)
47. Thunderbolts #24 (Marvel)
48. Incredible Hulk #474 (Marvel)
49. Adventures of Superman #565 (DC)
50. S. Wars: Boba Fett—Enemy of the Empire (D.H.)
51. Batman: Shadow of the Bat #83 (DC)
52. Action Comics #752 (DC)
53. Captain America: Sentinel of Liberty #7 (Marvel)
54. Superman: The Man of Steel #87 (DC)
55. Preacher #47 (Vertigo/DC)
56. Green Lantern: The New Corps #1 (DC)
57. Young Justice #6 (DC)
58. Star Wars #2 (Dark Horse)
59. Flash #146 (DC)
60. Gen^{13} #37 (WildStorm/DC)
61. Superman/Batman: Generations #3 (DC)
62. Deadpool #26 (Marvel)
63. Doctor Strange #2 (Marvel)
64. Ascension #13 (Top Cow/Image)
65. League of Extraordinary Gentlemen #1 (WildStorm/DC)
66. A-Next #6 (Marvel)
67. Darkminds #7 (Image)
68. Star Wars: Crimson Empire II #3 (Dark Horse)
69. Spirit of the Tao #7 (Top Cow/Image)
70. Robin #62 (DC)
71. Supermen of America (Collector's Edition) #1 (DC)
72. Alpha Flight #20 (Marvel)
73. J2 #6 (Marvel)
74. Catwoman #66 (DC)
75. Slingers #4 (Marvel)
76. Supergirl #30 (DC)
77. S. Wars: Mara Jade—By the Emperor's Hand #6 (D.H.)
78. Lady Pendragon #3 (Image)
79. Martian Manhunter #4 (DC)
80. Legends of the DC Universe #14 (DC)
81. Superman's Nemesis, Lex Luthor #1 (DC)
82. Wonder Woman #142 (DC)
83. Sandman Presents: Lucifer #1 (Vertigo/DC)
84. Starman #51 (DC)
85. Batman Beyond #1 (DC)
86. Gen^{13} Annual 99 (WildStorm/DC)
87. Birds of Prey #3 (DC)
88. Star Wars: Jedi Academy—Leviathan #4 (Dark Horse)
89. Tsunami Girl #1 (Image)
90. The Coven (vol. 2) #2 (Awesome)
91. Undertaker Preview (Chaos!)
92. Titans Secret Files #1 (DC)
93. Lady Death #13 (Chaos!)
94. Superboy #60 (DC)
95. Aquaman #53 (DC)
96. Azrael: Agent of the Bat #50 (DC)
97. Doctor Mid-Nite #1 (DC)
98. The Trenchcoat Brigade #1 (Vertigo/DC)
99. Hitman #35 (DC)
100. Purgatori #5 (Chaos!)

TOP 100 HIGHLIGHTS

ALEX ROSS' FUTURE SHOCK!

Earth X #0 (No. 5)
Sweet Heaven! Unlike *Kingdom Come* and *Marvels*, where the brush of hyper-popular painter Alex Ross kissed every single panel of art, *Earth X* only features Ross' plots and covers. The ideas and concepts of an apocalyptic Marvel future where *everyone's* got superpowers go back to Ross, but there won't be the artistic *tour de force* fans are used to from Ross–and they don't seem to care. The message is clear: If Ross is involved, fans will come.

Wildcats #1 (No. 13)
Born to be wild! The *Wildcats* relaunch looks to be successful, anchored as it is by well-recognized talent: former *Uncanny X-Men* writer Scott Lobdell and previous *WildC.A.T.s* artist Travis Charest. So far, so good. But a bimonthly schedule, designed to keep the creators up-to-date on deadlines, could hamstring this book as it floats in and out of fan consciousness.

Batman: "No Man's Land" (Nos. 27, 38, 44, 51, 96)
It's a disaster for Gotham City, but a boon for DC. Almost predictably, the "No Man's Land" story arc–dealing with a devastated Gotham sealed off from the rest of the nation–pushed Bat-sales up five to 10 percent across the board. Not every Bat-book crossed over with this story (*Robin* and *Catwoman* are noticeably absent), but those that did, such as *Azrael*, got nice sales-boost presents just after Christmas.

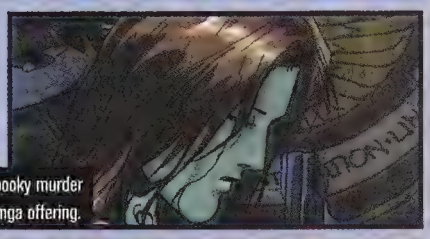
Star Wars: Boba Fett—Enemy of the Empire #1 (No. 50)
"He's worth more to Dark Horse alive!" Need more proof that the Maldorian-armored Boba Fett is a heavy hitter with "Star Wars" fans? His newest showcase beat even the core *Star Wars* title by eight places! He may not say much, but fans always show up for the 'Fett.

Tsunami Girl #1 (No. 89)
Splashing in at No. 89, the unknown *Tsunami Girl* hit the Top 100 like a tidal wave, undoubtedly riding the coattails of *Darkminds*, a previous Image manga hit. And *Tsunami Girl* covers by manga legend Hajime Sorayama sealed the deal. Sorayama, recognized as Japan's premier "good girl" artist, does very little comic work, so every appearance of his amazing airbrush work is cause for celebration.

The Trenchcoat Brigade #1 (No. 98)
Preacher writer Garth Ennis nabs so much of the Vertigo spotlight that it's easy to forget the smaller-but-solid following devoted to John Ney Rieber. During Rieber's 50-issue run on *Books of Magic*, the title almost consistently ranked as Vertigo's second-best seller. Rieber writes this mini-series, and his fans are showing that they'll follow him to whatever he works on.

CLOSE-UP LOOK

Break it on down now! Here's a look at the top-selling books in a couple of categories, with their overall Diamond Comic Distributors "Top 300" rankings in parentheses.



MIND OVER MANGA Pat Lee's art and a spooky murder mystery make *Darkminds* this month's top manga offering.

TOP 10 MANGA BOOKS

1. Darkminds #7 (Image, No. 62)
2. Tsunami Girl #1 (Image, No. 89)
3. Sailor Moon #4 (Mixx, No. 120)
4. Pokémon: The Electric Tale of Pikachu #3 (Viz, No. 131)
5. Dragon Ball Z Part Two #2 (Viz, No. 139)
6. Oh My Goddess!: The Devil in Miss Urd #3 (Dark Horse, No. 140)
7. Gunsmith Cats: Bean Bandit #1 (Dark Horse, No. 141)
8. Dragonball #11 (Viz, No. 143)
9. Blade of the Immortal #29 (Dark Horse, No. 146)
10. Ranma 1/2 Part Seven #12 (Viz, No. 151)

TOP 10 LONG-RUN (OVER #100) BOOKS

1. Uncanny X-Men #366 (Marvel, No. 1)
2. Wolverine #136 (Marvel, No. 7)
3. Green Lantern #110 (DC, No. 31)
4. Batman #563 (DC, No. 38)
5. Detective Comics #730 (DC, No. 44)
6. Incredible Hulk #474 (Marvel, No. 48)
7. Adventures of Superman #565 (DC, No. 49)
8. Action Comics #752 (DC, No. 52)
9. Flash #146 (DC, No. 59)
10. Wonder Woman #142 (DC, No. 82)

LOOKING BACK

SPAWNING GROUND Got a buck or two to spend? Spawn-Batman crossover books still litter the landscape today.

What topped the charts FIVE YEARS AGO?

1. Spawn/Batman: Red Scare (Todd McFarlane/Image)
2. X-Men #32 (Marvel)
3. Batman/Spawn: War Devil (DC)
4. Uncanny X-Men #312 (Marvel)
5. Adventures of Cyclops and Phoenix #1 (Marvel)
6. Wolverine #81 (Marvel)
7. Pitt #4 (Full Bleed/Image)
8. WildC.A.T.s #9 (WildStorm/Image)
9. X-Force #34 (Marvel)
10. Ghost Rider 2099 #1 (Marvel)

The Spawn-Batman event nabbed two of the top three spots five years ago. But realizations didn't quite meet expectations, and a jillion unsold copies are left today.

The Sleeper from five years ago this month? *Uncanny X-Men* #312, which featured Joe Madureira's first X-work and kicked off a three-year run by the Mad Man.

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YOU THINK YOU'RE SO SMART...

COMIC BOOK INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT

Who wants pointless comics trivia? We do, we do! Step on up to the plate and take yer cuts as we lob ya some quizzical comics queries. This month we'll be ranking your score against horrible superhero cartoon jingles. The more the jingle made comics sound stupid, the higher your score.

SCORE	RANK
0-4	"Na na na na na na na na, na na na na na na na na—BATMAN!"
5-9	"...X-Men, X-Men, this is their day, X-Men, X-Men, coming your way!"
10-14	"...wreckin' the town with the power of a bull, who is this Hulk, and why's he so lovable..."
15	"Here comes Stilt-Man, he's steppin' on stuff, he's tall and shiny, boy this guy is tough!" (...so we made this one up. But somewhere, right now, some terrible TV exec is reading this and going, "hmmmmm, bring me this...'Stilt-Man.'")

1 Which rough-and-tumble Spidey villain also sports a name from a James Bond flick?
a) Thunderball
b) Moonraker
c) Oddjob
d) Pussy Galore. Good God...can we even *print* that?

2 Which old-geezer superhero squad from the 1940s is getting a revamp and a new title in 1999?
a) The Invaders
b) The All-Star Squadron
c) The Justice Society of America
d) The "We Love Matlock" Brigade

3 What's the name of that government stooge who spent most of the '80s narrowly avoiding getting his ass kicked when he tried to tell the Avengers what to do?
a) Henry Peter Gyrich
b) Senator Robert Kelly
c) Graydon Creed
d) G.W. Bridge. Actually, he just deserves an ass-kicking on general principle.

4 Think fast, and no cheating! Which of Nick Fury's peepers is covered with an eye patch?
a) His left
b) His right
c) Neither, as of *Avengers* (vol. 3) #8
d) "Peeper" means "eye"? Whoa...we were thinking of something *completely* different...

5 Superman's got Metropolis. Batman's got Gotham City. That poor sad sack Aztek, the Ultimate Man, landed the much less impressive-sounding city of:
a) Charity
b) Melody
c) Vanity
d) Des Moines. Does anyone live there by choice?

6 Who's the world-famous comic artist who runs a world-famous comic art school with his own name on it?
a) Joe Kubert
b) Andy Kubert
c) Adam Kubert
d) Charles Schulz

7 He's the leader of Marvel's answer to the Justice League, the Squadron Supreme. His name sounds like the new model from Chrysler. He is:
a) Infinitum
b) Hyperion
c) Apex
d) LeBaron Zemo

8 Bruce Banner, known to the masses as the Incredible Hulk, recently mourned the loss of this very important part of his life:
a) General "Thunderbolt" Ross
b) Betty Banner
c) Rick Jones
d) His animated series

9 Deadpool's real name (no lie!) is the same as a current NFL quarterback. So what's that name?
a) Steve DeBerg
b) Randall Cunningham
c) Dan Marino
d) Wade Wilson

10 Which armored adversary did Iron Man accidentally kill during "Armor Wars," his quest to regain his armor technology?
a) Crimson Dynamo
b) Gremlin
c) Living Laser
d) H.E.R.B.I.E.

11 With a name like Wesley Dodds, this Golden Age DC hero should've been taking lickings instead of dishing them out:
a) Sandman
b) Hourman
c) Spectre
d) El Flipo, the Cuban Ball of Fire who's full of spunk and sass!

12 Which Marvel supervillain just got hypnotizing discs surgically implanted (yuck!) in his eyes?
a) The Ringmaster
b) Dr. Druid
c) Lorelei
d) Marty Feldman

13 Before recently marryin' Viper, Wolverine was once all set to tie the knot with this decidedly less nasty gal:
a) Yukio
b) Mariko
c) Ichi-kun Ichinohei
d) Buffy, in the touching "Bosom Buddies" series finale

14 Thor's mystic hammer has a name all its own. So what is it?
a) Mjolnir
b) Stormbringer
c) Valhalla
d) The Stool Softener

15 Okay, here's an easy one. Name the only Cliffhanger book that's come even remotely close to keeping a regular schedule.
a) *Battle Chasers*
b) *Danger Girl*
c) *Crimson*
d) Gotta be *Crimson*. Those other books run later than the Italian post office.

ANSWERS

Candy-asses can peek on the next page if this is too tough...

BULLPEN LOOK BEHIND THE CURTAIN

Wizard: 2, ToyFare: 2

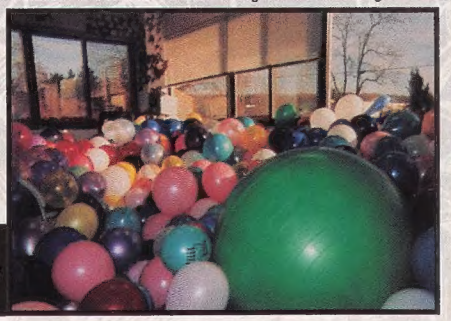
It was the work of evil clowns.

That, or it was yet another attack on the *Wizard* offices by the surly staff of *ToyFare*, *Wizard*'s sister toy magazine (whose office is just down the hall from the *Wizard* Bullpen). Over 1,000 balloons were packed over five feet high and jammed into every nook and cranny of the mighty *Wizard* Bullpen.

"It was like something out of 'Independence Day,'" *Wizard* Copy Editor Greg Orlando said. "Save for the fact there were no aliens, no mind-numbingly repetitive explosions and the problem was not resolved with the aid of a Macintosh PowerBook. I firmly blame this on *ToyFare*–and the people who canceled 'Sheriff Lobo'!" *Wizard* Managing Editor Andrew Kardon cursed an oath and proclaimed, "There will be serious repurcussions to this. It will be painful. And it must leave a mark." But the *ToyFare* staff remains unafraid. *ToyFare* Staff Writer Tom Root said, "The message was obviously this: *Wizard* blows."

The final resting place of the 1,000-plus balloons? Editor-in-Chief Pat McCallum's office. "I dig it," McCallum said from somewhere beneath the balloons. "It's like being in one of those giant ball pits without the hassle of mothers giving me funny looks because I'm like 20 years older than everyone else. That, and I'm naked under here."

And no, we ain't runnin' photos of *that*.



99 LUFTBALLOONS How'd this mess get into Pat's office? Ask the *ToyFare* staff.

TOP 10

things overheard at the superhero/villain St. Patty's Day party

10 "That's not the toilet! That's Ultron 7!"
9 "...and that's what Hypertime is. Why are you all looking at me like that?"
8 "Why is Iron Man's armor leaking?"
7 "Dude, stop me if I've had too much to drink. I don't want to wake up next to Modok again."
6 "Where should we hide Artie's and Leech's bodies?"
5 "Hey...who spiked Hydro-Man?"
4 "Let's name it 'The Phantom Menace'!"
3 "Nope...still no heartbeat."
2 "Somebody help the Hulk with his pants."
1 "If Northstar wants to march in the parade, I say we let him!"

CBIQ answers...

1. A 2. C 3. A 4. A 5. C 6. A 7. B 8. B 9. D 10. B 11. A 12. A 13. B 14. A 15. C

ONE OF THE DAMNED

DOING HARD TIME

André D. Shell RESEARCH ASSISTANT

WHY WE PAY HIM: "I gather art for all of the magazines. I search the four corners of the globe for promo art, exclusive art, stock photos, photo props and I even research staffer questions. I like to consider myself the glue that holds *Wizard* together."

BEST OUT-OF-CONTEXT QUOTE: "I can't swallow in this position!" (In reference to being made up as G.I. Joe villain Zartan for a *ToyFare* photo shoot.)

MOST BIZARRE *WIZARD* MOMENT: "I've done many things for photo shoots–like dressing up as an Ewok–but the weirdest time was when I was first hired. I had to put on a pair of pajamas and big, fuzzy slippers and sit on the couch. The shoot only lasted like 20 minutes, but some clown hid my clothes, so I ended up wearing the jammies for the rest of the day. The bizarre part is that no one looked twice!"

PHOTOS: PAUL SCHRADLE; LUCKY IS © 1998 GENERAL MILLS, INC.

TIME TRAVEL by RUSSELL LISSAU

KNIGHT MOVES

Frank Miller revived an aging Batman in 'The Dark Knight Returns' 13 years ago

The title told the whole story. *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* put Gotham City's protector back on top of the comic book world. Frank Miller's epic tale of an old soldier who refuses to fade away destroyed the caricature Batman had become after years of abuse from the campy 1960s TV show starring Adam West and the cutesy 1970s cartoon "Super Friends." It rebuilt him, keeping absolutely true to Batman creator Bob Kane's original, brooding image.

Miller, who wrote and penciled the four-issue series, had already acquainted readers with comicdom's darker side during his famous run on *Daredevil* during the early '80s. For *Dark Knight*, released in March 1986, he aged Bruce Wayne into his 50s and banished him to a restless retirement. But one stormy night, the inner demon inside Wayne erupts, and a driven Batman sets out to reclaim his city. Along the way he encounters enemies from his past—the Joker, Catwoman and Two-Face—and new villains called the Mutants. He is even joined by a female Robin and a one-armed Green Arrow.

Readers were hooked on the story, which was complemented by Miller's intense artwork, Klaus Janson's moody inks and Lynn Varley's vivid colors.

Miller sums up best why readers instantly took to his Dark Knight. "My Batman is essentially a terrorist," he laughs. "He just fights the right enemy."

One of those enemies is Superman, now a government tool, who is ordered to take down Batman in the series' brutal finale. In the shadows of Crime Alley where his parents were originally murdered, the Dark Knight does what countless villains failed to do—defeat the Man of Steel. It became one of the most memorable moments in comic book history.

Dark Knight was such a huge hit that its influence even reached mainstream culture. Articles about the book appeared in *Rolling Stone* and *Newsweek*, and the graphic novel collection was one of the first to be sold in "regular" bookstores. *Dark Knight* also set the mood for Tim Burton's grim "Batman" films. Miller's peers were blown away by the book, too. For years, creators copied its gritty art and grim storytelling, even parodying them occasionally. "I think it awakened a lot of people to new possibilities," *Dark Knight* co-editor Denny O'Neil says. "It raised the bar in terms of narrative technique, and the art form has benefited from that."

The series also inspired many of today's comic pros, including those who travel to Gotham City themselves. "I hold it up as an ideal example of storytelling," Paul Dini, writer and producer of the current "Batman" animated series says. "It was an amazing ride—it was mind-blowing."

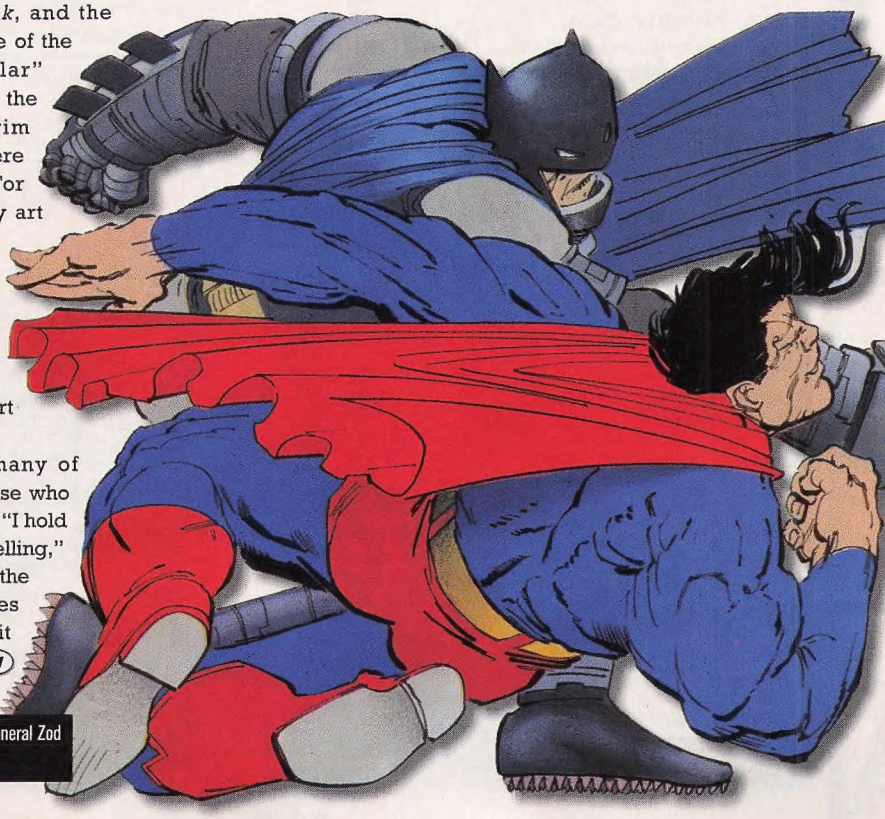
DATELINE

MARCH 1986

Sean Connery and Christopher Lambert cross swords in the first **"Highlander"** film....The pastel look of **"Miami Vice"** seizes TV viewers every Friday night....Austrian popster Falco's **"Rock Me Amadeus"** cradles the music charts....Off the coast of Florida, Navy divers recover the crew compartment of the space shuttle ***Challenger***, two months after it exploded during takeoff.

'MIAMI VICE'

PHOTO COURTESY OF: FOTO FANTASIES.



NIGHTY KNIGHT Miller's Batman does what General Zod could not: beat the crap outta the Man of Steel.

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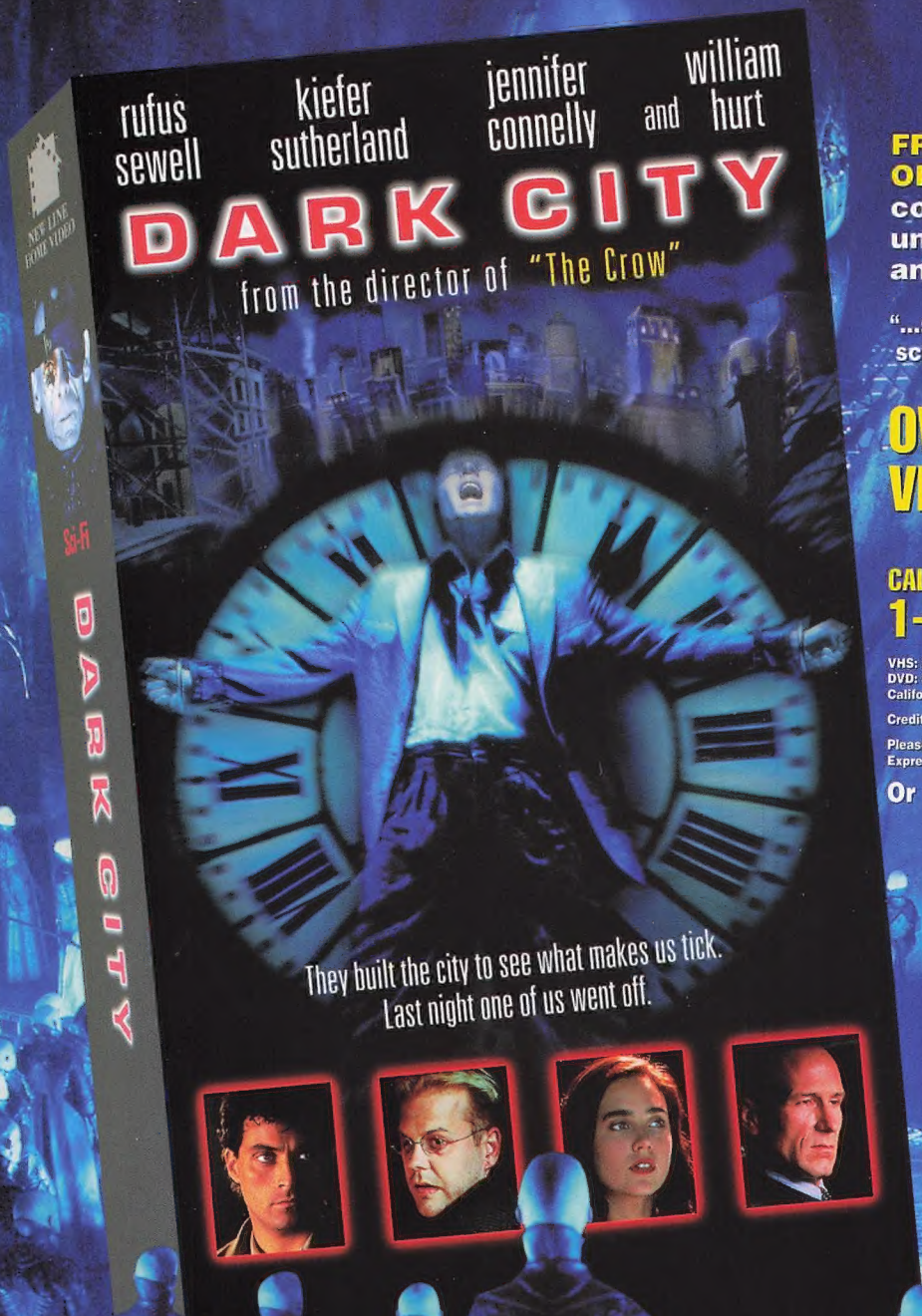

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